

# Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**Final Salute:** Sgt. Joshua Ford is carried to his final resting place by members of the Nebraska National Guard honor guard while senior National Guard leaders and Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy render a salute to the fallen Nebraska Soldier.

## Wayne-based truck driver killed in Iraq



Sgt. Josua Ford

**By Capt. Kevin Hynes**  
Editor

**A** Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier died in late July during a convoy mission in southern Iraq.

Spc. Joshua Ford, 20, of Pender, Neb., was killed when an improvised explosive device struck his vehicle during a convoy mission to

Tallil Air Base in southcentral Iraq on July 31. He is the fourth Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier killed since the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Ford is survived by his fiancée Michelle Frohlich; father Lonnie W. Ford; three sisters, Erin, Jessica and Shawn; grandmother Ella Petersen of North Bend; and

**See FORD on 5.**

## Guard preparing for Avian flu event; says families should also

**By David Nore**  
Acting Deputy State PAO

**A**s the United States continues to prepare for a possible outbreak of H5N1 Influenza A – more commonly known as Avian flu – members of the Nebraska National Guard are also busy preparing and refining the Guard's plan to help the state cope with possible situations arising from an epidemic.

According to Guard officials, the Nebraska Military Department is a full partner in the state planning process.

"Thanks to the state Health and Human Services Agency, and in particular Dr. Joann Schaefer (chief medical officer for HHS), Nebraska has perhaps the best plan for battling a pandemic situation in the nation," said Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke in his June 2006 *Prairie Soldier* column.

"The National Guard and the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) play important roles in that plan."

While planning has gone a

long way in helping the state prepare for an outbreak of Avian flu, according to health and Guard officials, there's much that families need to do to prepare as well.

Preparedness and education, they say, are the keys to successfully coping with a possible pandemic.

The potential affects on communities are myriad.

Guard missions, jobs, families, school and daycare are just a few of the services that officials expect to be affected by a pandemic

"The fact that experts

tell us we are overdue to have some type of pandemic outbreak on the horizon gives us the chance to see a pandemic coming instead of reacting to it after it's here," said to Lt. Col. Randy Amundson, military support to civil authorities officer for Joint Force Headquarters, Nebraska National Guard.

"Families need to be prepared. We are putting together a briefing that family groups and the Guard can get on this pandemic threat," Amundson

**See AVIAN FLU on 2.**



### Special Insert

Learn how to prepare your family.

## Crete Soldiers impress during mission in Iraq

**By Sgt. 1st Class Douglas Schultz**  
1-167th Cavalry PAO

*(Note: The article contains some opinions of the author)*

**T**he 134th LRSD (Long Range Surveillance Detachment) is quite a few miles away from Crete, Neb., yet they're right in the thick of one of the most important missions in Iraq.

Delta "Danger" Company has been given the responsibility for providing the quick reaction force for the 1-167th Cav-

alry stationed at Camp Anaconda near Balad, Iraq.

The Quick Reaction Force — or QRF — acts as a responding unit to emergencies and significant events that may occur on the LSA or beyond.

To sum it up, this unit responds like a fire station. Men, machines and material make up the unit, the most important component of which is the men. The Soldiers have to be ready to go at a moments notice.

As the 1-167th Cavalry Squadron conducts its base defense operation, the 134th

LRSD is busy assisting the squadron and other units located at the camp.

The 134th also conducts security missions, reconnaissance, intelligence gathering to include working with the Air Force, and combat patrols.

In order to do its mission, members of the QRF have been issued the latest war fighting technology and assets to complete the mission.

Even with its state-of-the-art equipment, the unit's most important assets are its

**See LRSD on 8.**

## Army Guardsmen help state battle fires in Valentine

**By 1st Lt. Cole Kilpatrick**  
Historian, Staff Writer

**N**early 60 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers were called up in mid-July to help battle a raging wildfire and triple-digit temperatures near Valentine, Neb.

According to Capt. Ryan Earleywine, Nebraska National Guard Military Support Office, the Guard Soldiers were called into action early July 17 when three wildfires broke out in the ravines north of Valentine at approximately 4:30 p.m. the afternoon before.

Those fires soon merged into one large blaze that destroyed 12 homes and charred around 3,000 acres of woodlands on the outskirts of the north-central Nebraska community and forced the evacuation of around 200

**See FIRE DUTY on 14.**

## Air Show part of year-long birthday celebration for Nebraska Air Guard

**By 2nd Lt. Camara Minks and Staff Sgt. Matt Boring**  
Staff Writers

**T**he Lincoln-based 155th Air Refueling Wing celebrated its 60th birthday July 26.

The Nebraska Air National Guard was first recognized by the federal government on July 26, 1946, after vigorous inspections were conducted by the 2nd Air Force headquartered at Offutt Air Force Base in

**See BIRTHDAY on 15.**



Photo by Lt. Col. Mark Novak

**Wild Blue Yonder:** A formation of U.S. Navy Blue Angels forms up behind the boom of a Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker, July 20, as the Nebraska Air Guard escorts the aircraft over Missouri enroute to an air show in Sioux Falls, S.D. The Blue Angels will be performing in Lincoln during the Sept. 23-24 "Guardians of Freedom" air show.

PRAIRIE SOLDIER  
1300 Military Road  
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508-1090

PRST STD  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
PERMIT NO. 40  
Lincoln, Nebraska

### INSIDE

- Air Guardsmen practice survival skills ..... 3
- First Nebraska Army Guard combat Soldiers in Iraq return home ..... 6
- Guardsmen help mentor Afghan soldiers during year-long mission ..... 9-12
- State's best shooters descend upon Hastings for annual competition ..... 20



# NEWS DIGEST

## ■Final portion of *Prairie Soldier* series on Battle of Bismark delayed until October

*Editor's Note:* Due to scheduling conflicts, the final portion of the series "Battle of Bismark – One Year Later" has been rescheduled for the October *Prairie Soldier*.

We apologize for any problems this may have caused.

## ■Survey: Troops believe in Iraq mission, morale generally high

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — Two-thirds of U.S. troops serving in Iraq say they believe the cause they're fighting for is worthwhile, according to a new *Stars and Stripes* survey.

The survey results, reported in the July 19 Mideast edition of *Stars and Stripes* newspaper, revealed that 46 percent of readers in Iraq who responded to a survey called fighting the war for America "very worthwhile." Another 30 percent rated it "somewhat worthwhile."

Fourteen percent of respondents called the mission "not very worthwhile," and just 8 percent referred to it as "not worthwhile at all," the July 20 paper reported.

The survey explored readers' views on a variety of other issues. Among them were how clearly their mission is defined, their unit's as well as their personal morale, support for troops in the Middle East, and how informed they are about that support.

Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that their mission is clearly defined, the survey noted. Fifty-five percent called it "very clear" and 27 percent called it "somewhat clear." Nine percent said it's "somewhat unclear," and 7 percent said it's "not at all clear."

## ■Guard provides fire, storm recovery, border support

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — National Guard troops are fanned out across the United States, confronting wildfires in the West and Midwest, conducting storm-recovery efforts in Missouri, providing security support in New Orleans, and boosting U.S. Border Patrol capabilities along the southwest border.

With more than 4,200 Guardsmen supporting Operation Jump Start along the U.S.-Mexico border — a number that was to go as high as 6,000 by Aug. 1. Guardsmen also responded to two other major domestic operations, National Guard Bureau officials said in mid-July.

Almost 150 National Guard members

are provided firefighting support, and another 200 responded after a series of powerful storms knocked out power to nearly a half-million people in Missouri in the midst of a heat wave, Guard spokesperson said in late July.

More than 40 North Carolina Air National Guardsmen from the 145th Airlift Wing arrived with two C-130 Hercules aircraft at Kingsley Field, a National Guard base near Klamath Falls, Oregon. From there, they supported the U.S. Forest Service and responded to wildfires in Oregon, Washington, California, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming, Lt. Col. Rick Gibson said.

The Guardsmen also operated the Forest Service's Modular Airborne Firefighting System, used to disperse fire retardant ahead of fires, Gibson explained. This bought time for firefighters on the ground to create fire breaks to control the blazes.

Meanwhile, Gibson and other National Guard troops served in the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho, to coordinate National Guard support for the firefighting mission.

In addition, the Nebraska Army National Guard deployed 57 people, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter and a CH-47 Chinook helicopter to support the wild-fire response in Valentine, Neb. The North Dakota Army National Guard deployed 24 troops, a UH-60 and UH-1H Huey helicopter and a Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck to support firefighting efforts in Sioux County, N.D.

In Minnesota, 11 Army National Guardsmen were called to duty to provide wildfire control in the west-central part of the state.

Meanwhile, more than 200 members of the Missouri Army National Guard's 1140th Engineering Battalion supported the state Emergency Management Agency in the eastern portion of the state. Powerful storms in the region caused power outages that shut down the water plant and 10 cooling stations and left 500,000 people without service.

In New Orleans, 345 Louisiana National Guard troops continue to support the New Orleans Police Department during Operation Crescent Guard.

## ■Afghan work continues amid violent, indiscriminate attacks

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — Coalition forces continue to aid and develop Afghanistan, even as they fight back terrorist extremists who are determined to stop progress, U.S. military officials reported July 23.

# Nebraska National Guard helicopters sent to Arizona

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Approximately 35 Soldiers from Grand Island's 1-134th Security and Support Battalion, Nebraska Army National Guard, have been tasked with a mission on the southwest border in support of Operation Jump Start.

According to Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska, the Soldiers — members of the 1-134th Security and Support Battalion — and four OH-58 observation helicopters deployed to Arizona July 30 where they will provide aerial observation along the border in support of the Customs and Border Protection Agency.

Lempke said the deployment of the Soldiers is in response to orders from National Guard Bureau.

"National Guard Bureau tasked us with a mission to help with aerial observation along the southwest border in Arizona and we're responding to that request," said Lempke.

"The Nebraska National Guard is superbly suited to do this mission — we have the skills, the capabilities and the highly trained people. Also, we can do this mission without degrading our ability to respond to homeland defense missions or state emergencies, such as



Photo by Chief Warrant Officer Bill Hager  
**To The Border:** A Nebraska Army Guard OH-58 helicopter crew trains during annual training at Hastings, Neb.

the recent Valentine wildfires, in any way."

Once in Arizona, the Guardsmen were scheduled to have additional infrared equipment installed on their helicopters before actively supporting the Customs and Border Protection Agency in sighting illegal immigrants crossing the border.

According to Sgt. 1st Class Barry Read, a platoon sergeant with Troop A, 1-134th Security and Support Battalion, who also serves as the unit's readiness sergeant, the Soldiers are ready for the challenging mission.

"Our aircraft are well suited for surveillance and once we are down there they will be fitted with infrared sights that will make them more suited for night surveillance," said Read prior to the departure.

The mission is expected to initially last approximately six months.

Aid and reconstruction efforts include a rebuilt mosque in the Paktya province and medical and humanitarian aid to hundreds of Afghan villagers in the Kandahar province, said Combined Forces Command spokesman Army Col. Thomas Collins.

The refurbished mosque, he said, was a joint effort by the Afghan government and coalition forces; it took three months and \$16,000 to complete. The project had been identified by the people of the Zormat district as "something they needed for their people," Collins said. A ribbon-cutting ceremony marked the mosque's completion on July 20.

Also, a cooperative medical assistance team provided preventive health care to more than 230 Afghan villagers and some 450 children in the Kandahar province.

All children under the age of 5, Collins said, were given de-worming medication. A second medical assistance team, he added, was en route to villages in the Uruzgan province.

But for every two steps forward that

the Afghan people make, terrorist extremists launch attacks designed to bring the country one step backward.

For example, two suicide bombers in Kandahar City killed five local Afghan civilians and two coalition soldiers July 22. Thirty-two civilians and eight coalition soldiers were wounded in the attacks.

Another coalition soldier was killed July 21 in the Sharana district of Paktika province, when rocket and mortar rounds landed inside a coalition base.

"The killed and wounded were coalition soldiers who were here in Kandahar, away from their homes and families, to work with the Afghan people to help them have the opportunity for a safe and secure way of life," Collins said.

"They were honorable, caring soldiers who were here to help build schools, give out shoes and wheat seed to villagers. They were soldiers who were here to free Afghanistan of extremists, who thrive on intimidation and spread fear among the people. They were soldiers who only wanted to help."

## AVIAN FLU continued from page 1.

added.  
So what do officials know right now?

- There is no pandemic flu in the United States or the world right now according to Dr. Joann Schaefer, chief medical officer for Nebraska Health and Human Services (HSS);

- Health officials believe a flu pandemic is likely;

- Pandemic flu is not seasonal flu;

- Pandemic flu could potentially kill millions of people and make millions more sick world wide.

The World Health Organization's (WHO) assessment of the pandemic threat puts the United States at Pandemic Alert Phase 3 because there have been "human infections with a new sub type (H5N1, (there are 6 pandemic alert phases).

Sustained human to human transmission any where in the world will be the triggering event to initiate a pandemic

*"Everyone needs a plan and the planning and education we do now will increase the success we have in an emergency."*

— Lt. Col. Randy Amundson

response by the United States according to WHO.

To help Nebraska families prepare, HSS has several brochures available on its Website at [www.hhs.state.ne.us/pandemic](http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/pandemic).

"This isn't only a government effort; it's a community effort and a personal effort. Everyone needs to take part in preparedness planning. If pandemic flu comes to Nebraska, if there's vaccines there won't be enough for everyone," said Schaefer in an open letter to the public on the HSS website.

Nebraska has been known to be ahead of the game when it comes to state pandemic plan-

ning. Nebraska HSS and the state have been working on a state plan and working with local health departments on pandemic flu preparedness.

National response aside, locally and family-wise "a lot of families rely on schools and daycare. If school and daycare are closed, will parents be able to do shift work, will one of them be able to stay home or what are they going to do?" said Amundson.

"Everyone needs a plan and the planning and education we do now will increase the success we have in an emergency" he added.

Simply put, officials are encouraging families to be prepared for the worst. "Pandemic flu is scary, but we have dedicated people throughout the state, so let's come together and do our part and plan for pandemic flu. Plan for the worst, hope for the best and see what Mother Nature hands us," Schaefer said.

## Prairie Soldier

1300 Military Road, Lincoln, Nebraska 68508-1090  
DSN 279-7302, phone (402) 309-7302 and facsimile (402) 309-7310

The *Prairie Soldier* is the newspaper of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard, authorized and published by the State Public Affairs Office, Military Department of Nebraska, in accordance with AR 360-1 and AFI 35-101. It is Army and Air Force-funded and published bi-monthly by contracted photo-offset process. Circulation is about 8,000.

**Deadline for all submissions is the first Wednesday of the month: February, April, June, August, October, and December.**

Letters, articles, notices of events, photographs and art are welcome, but may be edited for clarity or brevity. Publication of any submission is at the discretion of the editor. Submissions can also be emailed to [kevin.hynes@ne.ngb.army.mil](mailto:kevin.hynes@ne.ngb.army.mil). All photos must be high resolution and include complete caption information.

The views and opinions expressed in this newspaper are those of the writers and are not necessarily those of the Military Department of Nebraska or the U.S. Department of Defense.

The *Prairie Soldier* can be read on-line at [www.neguard.com](http://www.neguard.com)

**Commander-in-Chief**  
**Adjutant General**  
**Acting State Public Affairs Officer, Editor**  
**Acting Deputy State Public Affairs Officer**  
**Associate Editor**

Gov. Dave Heineman  
Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke  
Capt. Kevin Hynes  
David Nore  
Sgt. Katrina Loseke

### STAFF WRITERS

#### Nebraska Army National Guard

Lt. Col. Dan Lonowski	1st Lt. Cole Kilpatrick	Spc. Sheila Swantek
Maj. Martin Riley	2nd Lt. Russell Willbanks	Spc. Lynn Weiland
Maj. Dale Krueger	Sgt. Jeff Kassal	Spc. Riley Huskey
	Spc. Tegan Kucera	

#### Nebraska Air National Guard

2nd Lt. Camara Minks	Tech. Sgt. David Brumley
Chief Master Sgt. Vicky Cerino	Staff Sgt. Michael Boring

### STAFF PHOTOGRAPHERS

#### Nebraska Air National Guard

Senior Master Sgt. Lee Straube	Master Sgt. Kent Disney	Master Sgt. Vern Moore
Master Sgt. Alan Brown	Master Sgt. Kevin Nye	Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon





**Keeping The Smoke Out Of His Eyes:** Senior Master Sgt. Steve Minnick, a boom operator with the 155th Air Refueling Wing, holds a canister of signal smoke while participating in survival training at Camp Ashland, Aug. 5.

Photos by Master Sgt. Vern Moore



**Looking For Help:** Master Sgt. Mark Fusco, 155th Air Refueling Wing, holds a signal flare away from his face as he prepares to launch the flare. Portions of the Aug. 5 training focused on giving air crews hands-on training with different pieces of equipment they would need in the event of an emergency.

## Air Guard crews practice survival skills in August

By **2nd Lt. Camara Minks**  
Staff Writer

A thunderous boom breaks the drone of an aircraft's engine a split-second before the people onboard the plane feel the aircraft shudder and then begin descending wildly downward.

Moments later, the aircraft crew is on the ground, alive and unharmed, but faced with the daunting task of navigating to a distant rendezvous point while dodging potential enemy aggressors.

Despite the rarity of an aircraft going down in enemy territory, this nightmarish scenario is something every pilot, navigator, boom operator and aircrew member must be prepared to overcome should the rarity suddenly occur.

To refresh survival skills, aircrew and life support staff members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing conducted a combat survival training refresher exercise, Aug. 5 at Camp Ashland, Neb.

"We're here to make sure we know the training," said Capt. Bryn R. Scholtes, a KC-135R Stratotanker pilot with the 155th ARW. "There's so much equipment, if you don't do a refresher, you will never remember how to use all the stuff."

This year, members of the life support section concentrated on several different things, part of a three-year retraining requirement. While at Camp Ashland, members of Life Support taught aircrews about land navigation, evasion, water survival, signals and recovery, personal protection, combat intelligence, and the code of conduct.

Crews also worked to refresh themselves on how to read maps, how to apply camouflage,

how to use flares safely and properly, and what to do if they are captured.

After the two hour classroom sessions, participants had a chance to apply their knowledge in a practical exercise.

Groups of three to four aircrew members were given a scenario, a vest filled with basic first aid supplies, a compass, camouflage face paint, and then were told when and where to meet their rescue team – a clearing a little more than a mile away from the starting point.

Along the way crews were given survival tasks to complete. They had to give first aid to a wounded crew member, collect water and make cover using only their skills and what's in the vest, said Senior Master Sgt. Sarah M. Petersen, Life Support superintendent.

"(Participants) practice how to get to the clearing. They use processes learned in training to avoid hostiles that are out there," said Petersen.

Hostile forces – in this case members of the Survival Equipment section – were dressed in camouflage and carried M-16s with blanks. Members from the explosive ordnance disposal unit provided ground bursts, which gave the exercise a heightened sense of reality.

This year there were also decoys – members who were not carrying weapons, but who were not friendly forces. They wore red shirts instead of the red hats worn by friendly forces. If crews approached a decoy, they were automatically captured. If they approached a friendly force, they were automatically saved.

By having the decoys and friendly forces wear similar articles of clothing, instructors

could test if the crews were paying attention to detail, said Petersen.

The aggressors served two purposes, said Peterson. "They are playing aggressors and evaluating how the crews are doing. If (the crews) are playing and using good skills, they won't detain them," said Petersen.

Once the members successfully reached the clearing, they had to wait for a predetermined signal and 'pop smoke' said Petersen. This meant one crew member from the group lit a day or night flare at the edge of the clearing to identify their location.

"They should be able to see us, but we shouldn't see them," said Petersen while standing in the clearing looking at the tree line.

When signaled, the entire crew came out into the open with hands held in the air.

The last hurdle of their ordeal was authentication. Crew members had to be able to prove they were not hostile forces, a procedure reviewed during classroom instruction.

Adding to the difficulty of the training was the heat and humidity.

"The fact that it was so hot made me realize the need for water," said Lt. Col. Samuel R. Veney, a KC-135R instructor pilot. Water collection is as essential part of the land survival training, he added.

Water survival training is a component of the three year refresher, but this time crews were unable to get in the water due to contamination. Because of this crews were taught water skills on the land, practicing such tasks as how to use life rafts, personal flotation devices, and what to do when they must ditch over water to survive.

According to Maj. Phillip L.



**Forest Classroom:** Senior Master Sgt. Sarah M. Petersen, Life Support superintendent, instructs air crew members on land navigation techniques during the combat survival training refresher held Aug. 5 at Camp Ashland



**Final Challenge:** Nebraska Air Guard flying crews emerge from the Camp Ashland woods and run to an evacuation zone, the final hurdle of the day-long exercise.

Fields, a KC-135R Statotanker aircraft commander, this was far and beyond anything he ever did on active duty for refresher training and combat survival.

"We never camo'd up. We never went to the woods. We didn't shoot the flares," said Fields. "We just had classroom training, but we did it yearly."

In order to prepare the practical exercise, the members of the Life Support section take many months to prepare for the exercise. "We have to coordinate with munitions, EOD, fire department, safety. We

come out the day before and set up the site," said Petersen.

Even though the exercise takes lots of hard work and coordination from many areas, it is very beneficial to the air crews, many Guardsmen said.

"(The) benefit stems from having crew members with you and seeing where (their) strengths lie," said Lt. Col. Adam J. Dabrowski, squadron commander.

"There's only so much you can learn in the classroom. You need time for hands-on training."





## En Memorium Sgt. Josh Ford 1985-2006

# Father says son caring, thoughtful person

By Capt. Kevin Hynes  
Editor

On the morning of Aug. 2, Lonnie Ford awoke early to the sounds of raindrops tapping against his windows and for a moment he was transported back to a far happier time.

Listening to the rain, Lonnie remembered how his son used to go outside on days like this to play in the rain.

"Josh would've loved a morning like this," Lonnie recalled thinking a day later as he stood outside of a Pender High School gym preparing for one of the most difficult discussions he'd ever had here in this school. "I just knew that Josh would've been out there playing if he'd had the chance."

On Aug. 3, Lonnie Ford stood before members of the media to talk about the son he'd just lost, the mischievous boy with the huge heart, the talented artist, the proud young Soldier who loved driving the big trucks.

"Josh will be remembered for being a very caring person, for the life he shared with his family and friends," said Ford, whose son Spc. Josh Ford, 20, was killed July 31 when the truck he was driving was struck by an improvised explosive device in south-central Iraq during a convoy to Tallil Air Base. Josh was later promoted posthumously to the rank of sergeant. "It is now the time to grieve, but I know in my heart that Josh would like every one of us to live life to the fullest... to enjoy our time together."

According to Ford, Josh was a typical, All American kid whose mischievous antics sometimes would get him into minor trouble with his family. He was a young man who loved computer games, movies and drawing. He was also a kind-hearted person.

"I have discovered that Josh knew so many people that I didn't realize that he knew, that he had touched so many lives," said Ford as his wife and friends sat near his side and several dozen more family members, friends and members of the 189th Transportation Company who Josh helped enlist into the Nebraska Army National Guard sat behind him.

"He was an odd little kid. He did a lot of things that at the time we weren't real happy with," said Ford. "But he was so caring...so giving. And that's what we found out through all of the all calls and people coming over to talk to us."

Ford recalled a moment when Josh was in either seventh or eighth grade when he wanted to buy a pair of inline skates. Instead of buying the skates, Ford said he insisted that Josh get a job to pay for them himself.

Then, after purchasing the skates with the money he'd earned, Ford again had Josh wait, this time until he'd earned enough money to buy the protective equipment he needed to skate safely.

One afternoon, Ford said, Josh

brought the skates out to him, pleading with his father to let him try them out...just for a moment.

"Dad was soft-hearted," recalled Ford. "He put them on and immediately fell down and broke his wrist."

"He didn't want to admit that he was hurt," said Ford. "He got up and held his wrist and said, 'I'm not hurt real bad.' We put ice on it, but later that night we had to go to the hospital and found out that his wrist was broken."

Ford, who teaches several classes at Pender High School, said Josh's decision to join the National Guard took him completely by surprise.

One day, Sgt. 1st Class Brad Wieland, a recruiter from the nearby Guard armory in Wayne whom the elder Ford had known for decades, stopped in to talk with students about the Guard. To Ford's surprise, Josh wanted to talk with Wieland even though he was still a junior.

"Josh said, 'I want to talk with Brad,'" said Ford. "He said that 'I've always wanted to serve in the Guard.' He had kept that inside of him for a long time."

"I asked him if he wanted me to go with him, but he said no. 'This is something I want to do myself,'" he said.

Within a short amount of time of that meeting, Josh enlisted into Wayne's Detachment 1, 189th Transportation Company as a truck driver. Ford said that contrary to his initial expectations, Josh thrived in the military.

"Brad warned us that when we heard from him the first time in boot camp that he'd be crying and wanting to come home," he said. "The first time he called, it was, 'Dad, this is great. I'm enjoying myself. I'm happy with what I'm doing.'"

Ford said that love grew when Josh attended advanced individual training at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., to become a truck driver.

"He was going to use the National Guard to get his education...being a unit driver gave him that opportunity," Ford said. "He discovered that he just loved to drive those large vehicles."

"I kept asking him, 'Don't you ever let anyone else drive?'" Ford said, adding that Josh's response was always the same: "No. I like to drive as much as I can."

When Josh received orders to prepare for his deployment for Iraq last year, Ford admitted he was filled with anxiety.

"I went to my wife and said, 'I don't think he's going to come home,'" said Ford. He later talked with his own mother about his fears. "She said, 'I had brothers who went to World War II and I felt the same way. But they all came home.' But still, I just couldn't shake the feeling."

Ford said that he talked and e-mailed Josh frequently during his time in Iraq. The conversations, said Ford, typically ranged



Photo courtesy of the 189th Transportation Company

**On A Mission:** Spc. Josh Ford smiles for a photograph from the passenger seat of a truck during a mission in Iraq. Ford, who was posthumously promoted to sergeant, was remembered as a warm-hearted man who learned to love driving military trucks.

to the types of work Josh was doing. Often, the conversations also strayed to Josh's spending habits.

"I found out that he was the movie guy at his base," said Ford. "If they needed a video, they went to Josh. I got on him for spending a lot of money, but I'm glad he did now, because I know it made him happy."

While in Iraq, Josh also requested that his family send him some of the art supplies. Ford said that he and others soon packaged up a set of oil paints, pencils and other supplies for Josh to work with during his down time.

"He loved to draw," said Ford, adding that Josh was thinking about returning to college to study Art when his deployment was over. Some time later, a fellow Soldier delivered several art pieces Josh created while in Iraq. Two of those artworks – now framed – stood outside the door of the gym where Ford now spoke surrounded by pictures that chronicled the growth of a small, gap-toothed boy into a young, uniformed Soldier.

Ford said he noticed a change in his son early in the deployment. He sensed that Josh might be becoming disillusioned with the mission. However, by the time Josh came home on leave in April, his son seemed to have changed back into himself again.

"When he first got to Iraq, I think he was very disillusioned. I think, like a lot of people, he didn't really understand the whole political process," he said. "But after he came home in April, he was changed. He was very happy."

"I think he realized that the job that he was doing was important," Ford said. "He was very

proud of being a member of that unit and being a driver."

So proud in fact, Josh asked his father for an opportunity to speak with students at Pender High School and for a day talked to class after class about his experiences in Iraq. Ford said the visit also gave Josh the opportunity to propose to the love of his life, Michelle Frohlich. It also gave Josh the chance to think.

"I think, after he came home on leave, he had the same feeling (that he wasn't going to make it through the deployment)," said Ford, adding that Josh made an audio will and testament for his friends should he die. He said the look in Josh's face in several pictures taken during the leave seem to confirm his suspicions.

"He had this look of happiness in his eyes, like he was really happy with what was going on," said Ford. "I honestly believe that he knew something was going to happen."

Ford said that all too soon, he and Michelle had to take Josh back to Omaha for his flight back to Iraq and the war. "That was probably the hardest thing," said Ford about watching Josh board the aircraft. "Michelle and I cried quite a bit."

Ford's last conversation with his son occurred just two days before Josh's death. It was late at night when Ford logged onto his computer. As luck would have it, Josh was also logged on.

"I asked him how he was doing. He said that he'd just gotten back from a convoy and was getting ready to go back out on a convoy," said Ford. "He was trying to relax a little."

Later, Ford said he learned that Josh and his best friend, who also served in the unit,

spent the night before his last convoy grilling steaks they'd purchased in Baghdad. "Josh loved to grill steaks," said Ford. "He got to enjoy that night."

Two nights later, Ford was woken by a knock on the door. Outside were uniformed Soldiers.

Josh was gone.

As Ford cried that night and then got into his truck to travel across the state to break the news to Josh's closest family members, one thought continued to haunt him: Josh had died alone.

It wasn't until later that Ford received a phone call from Josh's best friend's father. His friend, Spc. Jeff Meyer, was located several trucks in front of Josh, saw the explosion envelop Josh's truck. Almost instantly, Meyer jumped out of his truck and rushed to his friend, arriving there in time to pull Josh from the disabled vehicle.

"His dad said that (Josh's friend) has a black eye and scratches and bruises all over his body... but he got to Josh," said Ford, his voice breaking from barely held back tears. "So his best friend was with him at that moment. So that makes me feel a lot better."

Ford said that in the days following Josh's death, he received dozens of phone calls, many coming from members of the Nebraska Guard from across the state to tell him that they'd met Josh and had thought highly of him.

"I just never realized how many people Josh touched in his life," said Ford later. "He was such a warm, caring person. He was the best son you could've asked for."



# Unit remembers Soldier with big heart, bigger sense of humor

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

When an improvised explosive device took the life of Spc. Josh Ford and critically injured Spc. Benjamin Marksmeier, the news felt like a punch to the guts throughout the close-knit 189th Transportation Company.

According to members of the unit, the loss was a difficult blow as the company prepares for the final few months of its deployment in Iraq.

"The Soldiers of the 189th were devastated with the loss of Josh and the injuries to Ben," said 1st Sgt. Joseph Wren, company first sergeant via e-mail. "The company was spread out across Iraq at the time of the incident, but we got all of them back to Tallil in less than two days."

"Our battalion took us off of the mission schedule from the time of the incident until after the memorial ceremony," said Wren. "This gave us time to pull everyone together to mourn for Josh, pray for Ben and get our emotions and feelings back under control."

According to Capt. Darin Huss, commander of the Norfolk and Wayne-based unit, as the

Soldiers returned to Tallil, they were given opportunities to speak with chaplains and grief counselors.

On Aug. 5, the unit held its official memorial ceremony at the post chapel at Camp Adder, Iraq. Wren said the chapel was "standing room only" with an estimated 400 people in attendance.

Along with the 189th Trans. Co. Soldiers, Nebraska Guardsmen from other units spread across Iraq also traveled to pay their respects.

Among those speaking at the ceremony were Spc. Jeffrey Meyer, Ford's best friend, and Sgt. 1st Class Michael Olsen, Ford's platoon sergeant. According to both Soldiers, Ford was unlike any other person they'd ever met.

"Josh had many talents and passions," said Meyer, who'd known Ford since both were kids growing up in Wayne. "He was an outstanding artist and could paint scenes of dragons and dark elves that would seem real."

"He loved to read. R.A. Salvatore was his favorite author and drzzt was his favorite character," said Meyer. "He was into all different kinds of music. If it had a good beat, it was on his radio. Even though Josh was tone deaf, he would belt out the lyrics

to his favorite songs and not care who heard him."

Meyer said that he was proud to be among the Soldiers and friends who were with Josh when he died.

"Josh was my friend, my brother and fellow Soldier," he added. "Though he is gone, the memory of his life will live on through each of us."

According to Olsen, Ford was always positive, always friendly and had already proven himself.

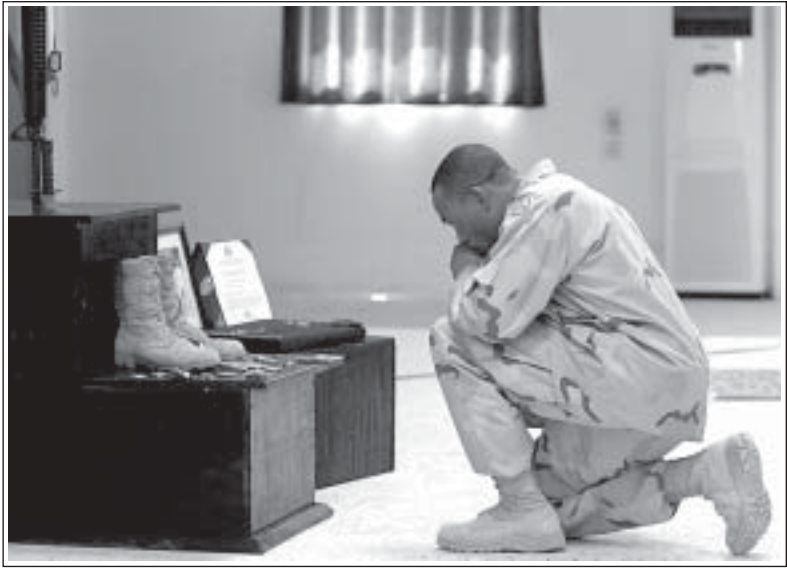
"When Josh first joined the Guard, he was just a kid; kinda chubby and still gaining self-confidence," he said. "He could barely do five push-ups. He probably missed four or five drills due to car accidents. Then, when he did show up, he would be sporting stitches."

"And then he became a Soldier and a man; a good Soldier and a good man," Olsen said, adding that Ford was charitable to everyone he met.

"Josh was a PX Ranger," Olsen said. "Before every mission he stocked up on pop, snacks and full combat load of cigarettes. He was always ready and willing to share."

Olsen said Ford's humorous side is probably one of the things he'll remember the most.

"Josh was a smoker and made



U.S. Army photo

**Remembering A Fallen Patriot:** Sgt Durvan Wallace, 485th Combat Support Battalion, pauses to pray near a memorial set up for Sgt. Josh Ford during services held in Iraq for the fallen Nebraska Army Guardsman on Aug. 4.

no bones about it," he said. "He smoked like a chimney and he was never at a loss for nicotine."

"On one mission, one of the Soldiers said he was feeling stressed and that he could use a cigarette, but that he didn't smoke. Josh volunteered to smoke one for him," said Olsen. "When a second guy made the same comment, Josh made the same offer. That night, Josh could be seen smoking three cigarettes all at the same time."

"He probably quit smoking more than anybody," Olsen added. "It may be a contradiction in terms, but he never gave up quitting."

In closing his comments, Olsen recalled the comments he'd heard

from one of Ford's comrades earlier.

"Our friend Ford walked into the light today. Catapulted into the heavens; he now knows the answers to all life's most profound questions," Olsen recited.

"In his last moments, surely he heard the frantic commotion of his fellow Soldiers trying so hard to keep him earthbound. But no, no more silly human games for Ford. Only peace for all eternity; and a view of the stars not even an astronaut could imagine."

"His passing reminds each of us that we only have a little while," Olsen said. "But God, we thought we'd have Ford a little while longer."

## FORD continued from page 1.

nephew William Dyer.

"Our deepest condolences go out to the family of Specialist Ford," said Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska in announcing the loss. "The Nebraska National Guard is deeply saddened by this loss. Joshua was well thought of by his unit and his loss today is being felt throughout the state."

A second Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier was seriously wounded in the blast. Spc. Benjamin Marksmeier sustained severe wounds and was evacuated to Germany and is now undergoing treatment at Walter Reed Hospital in Maryland.

Ford and Marksmeier are both members of the Wayne-based Detachment 1, 189th Transportation Company.

According to unit officials, the two Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers were driving a military truck in a convoy from Forward Operating Base Delta to Tallil Air Base when their truck was struck by the IED near An Numaniyah, Iraq, during the early evening hours of July 31. Despite heroic efforts by fellow 189th Trans. Co. Soldiers in the convoy, said Capt. Darin Huss, company commander, Ford died shortly after the incident.

Ford was born on Sept. 27, 1985, in Pender, Neb. He attended Wayne Public Schools in Wayne until his junior and senior years when he attended Pender High School, graduating in 2004.

Ford joined the Nebraska Army National Guard as a heavy vehicle driver in February 2003 while still attending high school. He was mobilized for Operation Iraqi Freedom in October 2005.

Lempke said the Soldier will be sorely missed.

"Specialist Ford was a dedicated Soldier who deployed to

Iraq to help that nation rebuild itself into a self-sufficient member of the world community," said Lempke. "Unfortunately, we're up against an enemy that has vowed to do anything it can to make sure that does not happen."

Ford, who was promoted posthumously to the rank of sergeant, was buried with full military honors on Aug. 10 in Pender, Neb. Among the mementoes of the lost sergeant that were placed in St. Mark's Lutheran Church were photos that chronicled a young, gap-toothed boy who grew into a proud Soldier and several of the medals Ford earned while in Iraq including his Bronze Star and Purple Heart.

"We gather this morning to honor and celebrate the life of Josh Ford," Rev. Margaret Olson told a packed congregation filled with Ford's family, friends, families of other 189th Trans. Co. Soldiers, National Guardsmen from across the state and state military and political leaders. The crowd was so large, in fact, that many of the attendees listened to the services via loudspeakers placed in the church basement and outside in the grass.

"He didn't want a lot of grief and tears... just celebration," said Olson, before speaking about the loss. "We had been praying for October to get here so that Josh and the whole 189th could come home. And I thought, why didn't God listen to our prayers?"

"I think it's because God gives us free will. He let's us make choices and sometimes those choices put us in difficult situations," she said. "In Josh's case, it was because he made the brave an honorable choice to serve his country. For as long as he could remember, it was Josh's dream to be a Soldier."

"We thank God for Josh and all of the other veterans who have



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**Fallen Son, Lost Hero:** Eight-year-old William Dyer hugs his grandfather while looking down at the flag presented to Lonnie Ford during the funeral of Sgt. Josh Ford, 189th Transportation Company, who was killed by a roadside bomb in Iraq on July 31. Seated next to Lonnie are his wife, Linda and mother Ella Petersen.

served our great country over the years. We thank God for those who are serving today," Olson said.

Following the funeral – during which Ford was eulogized as a faithful and fun-loving son, a dedicated and loving boyfriend and fiancé, and caring brother and uncle – Ford was escorted to his final resting place at Rosehill Cemetery on a hillside overlooking Pender by hundreds of vehicles, including dozens of flag carrying motorcyclists of the Patriot Guard, a voluntary motorcycle group made up of veterans and others who attend funerals across the Midwest.

Also saluting Ford were several thousand local area citizens who lined the course of the processional standing shoulder-to-shoulder in red, white and blue shirts.

Later, Ford's father Lonnie spoke of the overwhelming sense of community patriotism shown his son.

"This is so overwhelming today," said Ford, who served as the family spokesperson. "We didn't expect it. Josh would've been saying, 'What the heck is this big fuss about?'"

The display was so overwhelming, Ford said, that midway through the journey to the cemetery, he rolled down the window of his vehicle to thank as many people as he could.

"I can't put it into words," he said. "It's overwhelming to know the support that you have from the community and the nation. Patriotism is not dead in this country. It is alive and well."

"They may say on both coasts that it's not there, but here... this Midwest has that patriotism that

we need."

Ford also spoke of the pride he felt for his son, adding that he knew exactly what he would've told him if he'd had one last chance to talk.

"I'm proud of him. I'm proud of him," Ford said. "We knew that he was doing what he wanted to do... driving those big trucks."

"We have a picture of him. He told me that he'd quit smoking... he's sitting in his truck and I don't know who took the picture, but he's got a cigarette hanging out of his mouth and you could see the determination in his face to accomplish his mission... to do the best job that he could. It's just amazing," he added.

According to Ford, Josh will be forever missed, adding that he was a terrific son who had a special gift of relating with children, particularly his eight-year-old nephew William Dyer with whom Josh spent hours with playing video games and just simply hanging out.

"He was just fantastic with my grandson William," said Ford. "And William just loved him."

Ford said that ability to relate to children was always on display. While home on leave in April, Josh and his fiancée Michelle traveled to Papillion to visit her mother's daycare. While there, Josh helped calm a crying child and soon found himself surrounded by the other children.

"He just had a magnetism," said Ford. "And little kids, I guess, could feel it."

While the loss of his son was tragic, Ford asked people to keep others in their prayers as well.

"He's our hero and I hope everyone in the state remembers that we have over 100,000 others that are in harm's way and we have to recognize the sacrifices and the duty they're doing for this great nation."





Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**A Family's Wait Ends:** Staff Sgt. Earl Bascue hugs his wife, Angel, while his children Jacob, Alexis and Alivia celebrate the end of a year-long separation, June 22, at the National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., where members of Bascue's unit, Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry, were welcomed home from a deployment to Iraq.

# Home At Last

■ Guard's first combat troops return to Nebraska after year-long mission in Iraq

By David Nore

Acting Deputy State PAO

**S**etson hats and spurs might have been a familiar sight to friends and family members, but the Soldiers wearing them hadn't been home much for the last 18 months as they stepped off the charter jet to the loud cheers of over 800 friends and family members.

Finally, after six months of training and a year-long combat tour, it was over. The members of Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry were home and headed back into the arms of loved ones who filled the grassy area near the Army National Guard hangar in Lincoln.

To commemorate the June 22 arrival, each of the Hastings and Grand Island-based Soldiers was handed a single rose as they reached the bottom steps of the aircraft to present to a loved one left behind.

Family and friends who had prepared banners, chairs and decorations in the hangar shed tears of joy as they sought out their loved one.

Finally, the mission was over.

"We are just so proud of each and every one of them" said Nan Rowe, family support group co-leader for Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry.

"It's been a tough day, but very personal. Your faith and your family are the two things that get you through this," said Phil Odom, father of Sgt. Sion Odom, earlier in the day as he arrived and took charge unrolling banners and a huge American flag for the welcome home ceremonies.

After a heartfelt welcome from family and friends, the crowd moved into the hangar and sat or stood patiently while speeches were given by government and military officials.

In the front row sat Bob and Beverly



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**We Did It:** Sgt. Joe Dunlap, Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry Squadron, holds up a hard-won trophy from his year-long deployment to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The plaque, which bears the remains of an unexploded mortar shell, was presented to Dunlap's platoon by members of a thankful Marine bomb squad they protected.

Smith, father and mother-in-law of Capt. Jeffrey Searcy, commander of Troop A, holding twins Adam and Samantha who were born during Searcy's deployment. It was just one of many reminders of all the family events that occurred during the 12-month absence of the Soldiers, all of whom are husbands, fathers, grandfathers, uncles and sons.

"We are grateful to you all and on behalf of all Nebraska citizens very, very proud of you" said Governor Dave



Photo by David Nore

**Deployment's Last Steps:** Soldiers from Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry, file off an airplane and walk toward the waiting arms of their families.



Photo by David Nore

**They're Home:** Hundreds of family members, friends and others wave their signs and flags as the first members of Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry Squadron emerge from an airplane that carried them from Camp Shelby, Miss., to Lincoln, Neb., June 22, ending a year-long mission to Iraq.

Heineman. "We can't express enough our thanks for your service and sacrifice".

Patriot Guard and Legion motorcycles lined up outside the hangar while dignitaries spoke showing their support for the sacrifice of the Cavalry Soldiers.

"You have done something that will go down in the annals of Nebraska military history. You have served for one full year in the most hostile region in Iraq. You have met the enemy face-to-face and they have backed down," Command Sgt. Maj. Tom Shunk said on behalf of Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke.

"After 18 months of deployment, the longest deployment of a Nebraska Na-

tional Guard unit since World War II, this is not the time for long speeches. These men of Troop A, 1-167th Cav. have earned tremendous respect for their individual and team successes," Searcy said as he addressed his men for the last time during that deployment.

"Our ultimate goal of returning home and standing on the same ground as our families is complete," he said.

According to Searcy, the unit conducted over 1,600 missions during the time it was stationed in Ramadi, Iraq.

"The majority of these missions were done at the platoon-level and even the squad-level at times," Searcy said. "All of these men operated and were charged with higher responsibilities and tasks that are normally given their rank in the most dangerous 45-kilometer area in Iraq known as Al Anbar province, or more specifically Ramadi."

"These men conducted just about every mission that could be expected," he added. Finally, as Searcy moved into position in front of the crowd, he shouted the words that all assembled had longed to hear for more than a year.

"Alpha Troop...Dismissed."



# 'Better than a birthday present'

■ Guardsmen given 'thunderous' welcome after year-long mission with Afghan army

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

In the world of little girls, birthdays are a huge occasion.

Usually, visions of presents, cakes and parties fill a young girl's mind days and sometimes even weeks before the big event.

This year, however, as Krista Hinrichs prepared to celebrate her eighth birthday on July 14, she had one special wish.

She wanted daddy to come home.

As luck would have it, Krista got her wish a day early this year when her father, Capt. Cory Hinrichs, arrived in Lincoln on July 13 with 36 other Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers after serving a year in Afghanistan with the Camp Ashland-based 209th Regional Training Institute.

While in Afghanistan, Hinrichs and the other Nebraska Soldiers – officers and sergeants – helped train members of Afghanistan's new national army to eventually take over security in the war-torn nation.

According to Hinrichs, who spent half of the deployment to Kabul serving as unit intelligence officer and the other as the Task Force Phoenix liaison with the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division, the welcome home was unforgettable.

"It's great... words can't possibly describe (how good this feels)," said Hinrichs, moments after being mobbed by family members after stepping off of a military bus in front of the Penterman Armory at the National Guard air base in Lincoln. "You've been looking forward to this every day and when you finally are here, it's like 'Oh, were done.'"

Hinrichs' family were part of a welcoming crowd of more than 500 who gathered at the armory to welcome the returning Guardsmen.

Even though lightning flickered beneath a distant, menacing thunderstorm, nature's electricity paled in com-

parison to the energy that surged from the crowd. As cheers filled the air, the Soldiers were swept up by hugs and kisses after stepping off a bus following a flight on Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker that had transported the Guardsmen from their demobilization station at Fort Stewart, Ga.

Even the dignitaries seemed to get caught up in the moment.

"When I first got here, it looked like there were 15 people for every Soldier," said Gov. Dave Heineman while addressing the crowd. "I think it's now grown to where there are 25 for every Soldier."

"If you have any doubt about the patriotism in this country and particularly in our state, all you need to do is look around this room here today," said Heineman. "We are very, very proud of you."

According to Col. Ronald Schrock, commander of the Theater Assistance Group in Afghanistan, the training mission at Kabul consisted of the Nebraska Guardsmen and 32 Florida National Guard Soldiers, who formed the core group for a force of 300 officers and sergeants from seven different countries.

"We trained 17,000 officers, sergeants and soldiers for the newly forming Afghan National Army," said

Schrock, "which is now deployed throughout Afghanistan and is fighting Al Qaeda, the Taliban and other anti-government forces."

"Through the efforts of your Soldiers of the Training Assistance Group, Afghanistan is able to start fighting for its own security and hunt down those who are responsible for the attacks on our own country on Sept. 11, 2001," Schrock told the assembled crowd. "We left Afghanistan a far better place than it was when we arrived."

Hinrichs agreed.

"We made a huge impact," said Hinrichs. "In terms of developing their army to prepare to stand on its own and also to have the support of the country itself...they want to improve, they want to get better."

Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska, said the Soldiers should forever be proud in all that they



Photo by David Nore

**Welcome Back:** Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke jokes with Col. Ron Schrock during the welcome home ceremony for members of the 209th Regional Training Institute, July 13.



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**Home Again:** Sue Hinrichs hugs her husband, Capt. Cory Hinrichs, after he stepped off a military bus in front of the Penterman Armory in Lincoln, ending a one-year mission to Afghanistan for 37 members of the Camp Ashland-based 209th Regional Training Institute.

accomplished in Afghanistan.

"As that country continues to take baby steps forward towards becoming part of the world economy, you'll be able to look back in pride over what you did that full year in helping to train their Army so that they can indeed sustain peace and order in that nation," said Lempke.

Lempke also thanked the families for their sacrifices during the deployment, adding that family support was critical to the success of the Soldiers' mission.

"Your sacrifice has been every bit as difficult and every bit as important as your loved ones' who have served overseas," he said.

Standing to the side of the room,

surrounded by daughters Krista and Kaley, who also celebrated her fifth birthday earlier in the week, Hinrichs and his wife, Sue, soaked in the atmosphere.

"We're just happy and thankful and grateful that he's home safe and we're all together again, said Sue Hinrichs.

Hinrichs' daughters agreed.

"This is what I was wishing for for my birthday present," said Krista. "I wanted my dad home. This is way better than a birthday."

Kaley, momentarily quiet as she hugged her father's neck tightly, agreed, shaking her head vigorously.

"Way better than my birthday," she quietly whispered.

## York preparing to paint town red, white, blue to officially welcome local Guard Soldiers home

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

The city of York will be painted red, white, and blue, Sept. 8-10, as the central Nebraskan community celebrates its 27th annual "Yorkfest" by honoring members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 1075th Transportation Company.

According to Errinn Bristol, 2006 Yorkfest chair, the community decided to use this year's festival to wish the members of its local Army National Guard unit, which returned from a year-long mission to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom last year, a belated welcome home.

"When the unit deployed in 2004, the entire community came out to wish farewell and honor our Soldiers in a variety of ways, in-

cluding a banquet in their and their families' honor," said Bristol.

"However, when they came home, the welcome home celebration was held in Columbus because the unit in York is a detachment of the unit based there. So, we've never really had an opportunity to honor the unit by officially welcoming them home to York."

Nebraska Army Guard Soldiers won't be the only honored guests, either.

Bristol said that the community will be honoring all service men and women who have fought in past wars as well as those service men and women currently involved in the Global War on Terror.

York will also commemorate the fifth anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks during the weekend.

"This celebration, and more im-

portantly, our freedom would not be possible without the brave men and women that have served and currently serving our country," Bristol said in a letter to members of the 1075th Trans. Co.

"We would like to take this celebration to publicly acknowledge and thank those that have served and their families."

Among the activities scheduled for the weekend are a Friday Afternoon Club, a pancake feed, a Saturday parade, USO show, MASH unit relays, barbecue cook-off, children's fun alley, World War II in York display, 9/11 five-kilometer race and a Figure 8 race held at the York County Fairgrounds (free of charge for anyone with a military ID.)

For more information, check out the Yorkfest Website at [www.yorkchamber.org](http://www.yorkchamber.org).



Photo courtesy of Errinn Bristol

**Goodbye, Good Luck:** Members of the York community line the streets and air as members of Detachment 1, 1075th Transportation company depart for a year-long mission to Iraq in 2004.



# Guard Soldier takes second commission

■16 years after graduating from Officer Candidate School, Guardsman pins on second lieutenant bars again

By Lt. Col. Dan Lonowski

Staff Writer

For the second time in his military career, Carlos Van Nurden pinned on second lieutenant bars, Aug. 8.

And after 16 years in military limbo, 2nd. Lt. Carlos Van Nurden is once again serving the Nebraska National Guard and his country as an officer.

After being commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1988, VanNurden transferred to the Inactive Ready Reserve. Van Nurden said the demands of his civilian job did not allow for him to attend his Officer Basic Course.

Without OBC, Van Nurden would be forced to resign his commission as an officer.

Van Nurden said the incompatibility between his civilian job and his National Guard role did not allow him to make a full commitment to the Guard.

"I worked for a company that was not conducive to National Guard service," Van Nurden said. "I traveled extensively. This made (attending) weekend drills difficult. I had to use my vacation time to attend annual training, which meant I never had time to take a vacation with my family."

Van Nurden knows what it means to be committed to the military: he had previously served on active duty with the Marines.

Van Nurden wasn't a soldier again until he re-entered the National Guard in January 2005. He said that because

his civilian job wanted him to transfer to Boston, he decided to leave the civilian work force and become a full-time Guardsman.

Soon after, Van Nurden got a job with the National Guard as a visual information specialist. In other words, he develops web pages.

Van Nurden said he owes his rejuvenated military career to long-time friend and fellow OCS graduate Lt. Col. Richard Dahlman.

"I guess I could credit Lieutenant Colonel Dahlman for my re-entry," Van Nurden said. "He believes I can do good things for the Guard."

With the help and persistence of Dahlman, Van Nurden came back to the military as a sergeant. And while he was fine with that rank, the logical next step for Van Nurden was to gain back his status as an officer.

"I feel I can do more to benefit the Guard as a commissioned officer by way of responsibilities and influence," Van Nurden.

Since returning to the National Guard, Van Nurden said he has filled out tons of paperwork and made dozens of telephone calls trying to become a lieutenant again. Chief Warrant Officer John Ayers, state officer strength manager, said Van Nurden is very deserving to be an officer.

"He was a man on a mission," Ayers said of Van Nurden. "Even after National Guard Bureau said 'no' he continued to pursue the commission. He and Lieutenant Colonel Dahlman would not give up."

Ayers said that after confronting regulations and waivers, the process had gone all the way to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for approval. Ayers also said Van Nurden's persistent pursuit serves testimony that he has what it takes to be a leader.

"Carlos brings a determination and will (to the Guard) to get things done," Ayers said. "He certainly doesn't shy away from a challenge. I see him as an officer that gets results with a 'can-do' attitude."

"Lieutenant Colonel Dahlman believes in me and has high expectations," Van Nurden said. "I promised I would try my best to meet those expectations."



Photo by David Nore

**Lieutenant Once Again:** Carlos Van Nurden stands at attention as he is sworn into the Nebraska Army Guard as a second lieutenant on Aug. 8, 16 years after first becoming an officer in the Guard.



Photo by David Nore

**Digital Technology:** Spc. Laura Yeramysheva shows a digital photograph she just shot to an Azeri soldier during training at Camp Ashland, Neb., in May.

## Nebraska Army Guard Soldier uses language skills to translate for Azeris during visit to state

By David Nore

Acting Deputy State PAO

When Spc. Laura Yeramysheva, a member of the 313th Medical Company, was given the opportunity to translate for five soldiers from Azerbaijan who were visiting the Regional Training Institute recently, she jumped at the chance.

"This is a great chance for me to speak Russian with other soldiers," she said. "I speak Russian, there is kind of a mix of which of these soldiers speak Russian. I live with my father and he and I always speak in Russian."

The Azeri soldiers were surprised to find a fellow Azerbaijani in the middle of the United States almost 6,000 miles from their homeland.

How Yeramysheva came to join the Nebraska Army National Guard is a story in itself.

"I was born in Azerbaijan, but I am an Armenian," she said. "We came over here to America because of the war between Azerbaijan and Armenia."

"I still don't know completely about the conflict because I was five years old when I came over here with my family."

Originally Yeramysheva had no plans for a military career. That changed her junior year when several recruiters vis-

ited her school.

"It sounds kind of funny but one of my friends came over and said there were some military people in the lunch room and they were giving away free key chains," she said. "I talked to them and what they would pay for college sounded interesting so I enlisted and went to basic training the summer of my junior year."

Since her enlistment the Guard has figured prominently in Yeramysheva's life. "I graduated from high school on the 16th of May 2004, and three days later I left for San Antonio for four months to do my medical training," she said.

"Then after I got back I had about a two-month break and then I started training in Fort Riley, Kan., before going overseas to Iraq in February for 12 months."

When Yeramysheva was approached earlier this year about serving as a translator during the visit by the Azeri soldiers, she quickly realized it was an extremely important mission. It was also an opportunity to both help them with translation and help showcase her country to fellow Nebraskans.

"Most people don't know where Azerbaijan is," she said.

"They ask me where I was born, and then they've never even heard of it when I tell them."

## LRSD

continued from page 1.

Soldiers.

Led by 1st Lt. Kyle Hildebrand and 1st Sgt. Wilfred Uhing, the 134th LRSD is a one-of-a-kind unit in the Nebraska Army Guard, hailing from Crete where the unit would normally be practicing airborne operations as well as refining its long range surveillance and reconnaissance skills.

While in Iraq, the 134th LRSD has grown into a company-sized organization with the addition of Soldiers from Troop C, 1-167th Cavalry and numerous Soldiers from the Individual Ready Reserve.

According to officials, despite the fact the unit is made up of Soldiers from several different organizations, its already hard to distinguish one Soldier from another.

One of the recent arrivals is Spc. Shaun Whiting from St.



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Douglas Schultz

**Preparing For A Patrol:** Spc. Joshua Kushen, Beatrice, Neb., secures ammunition after mounting his weapon onto the top of an armored Hum-Vee. This is just one of many preparations Soldiers make prior to conducting combat reconnaissance patrols.

Cloud, Fla., an IRR Soldier who was reassigned to the 134th LRS.

Despite bouncing from unit to unit six times while training in Mississippi – a situation that has left Whiting with some resentment toward the Army because of the hardships he's had to endure – he said he's been

impressed since his reassignment into his present unit.

"First Sergeant Uhing is doing all he can to help me with my problems," Whiting said. "(The) LRS is a tough unit, but squared away. I am lucky to be with the LRS."

In looking at the makeup of the 134th LRSD, its easy to see

why new arrivals like Whiting are impressed.

Many of the LRSD Soldiers are Ranger qualified, which, along with the increased training that the Soldiers received while earning their coveted Ranger tabs, has increased the unit's overall capabilities of the mission and makes them a huge force and combat multiplier.

The unit has also conducted numerous training with units from foreign countries, giving it an even greater capability from which to draw from.

While in Iraq, the unit is constantly on call. Yet, there are different levels of readiness. Due to security measures we are not able to discuss numbers or types of readiness, but during times of downtime the unit betters itself by keeping skills honed and sharpened.

Also, there is always time for marksmanship training and developing and refining standard operating procedures.

On July 9, I had the opportunity to ride along with the first section of the first platoon of

the 134th. This section is led by Staff Sgt. Jeremy Reece of LaVista, Neb.

The mission at hand on that day was a combat reconnaissance patrol outside the LSA. The patrol began with PCC's and PCI's – Pre Combat Checks and Pre Combat Inspections.

Each Soldier in the section made his position ready to conduct the patrol.

Weapons were mounted, communications checks, ammunition inspected and stowed, vehicles preventive checks made, and personal weapons and equipment were inspected.

Then Reece gave a mission pre-brief and answered all questions the Soldiers in the section had. In addition to PCC's and PCI's, the section talked about the where, when, who, and why of the mission.

Soon after we were on our way to the planned area of patrolling. I am happy to report that the mission went as planned without incident or accident.





**All Together Now:** Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard assigned to help train members of the new Afghan National Army pose for a photo with Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke and Command Sgt. Maj. Tom Shunk at Fort Hood, Texas, in February 2005 shortly before the Soldiers deployed overseas. It was one of the few times that all of the Nebraskans were together until the Soldiers demobilized in early 2006.

## ‘Witch’s brew’ unit spends year helping build Afghanistan’s new army

**By Sgt. Katie Loseke**  
Associate Editor

**T**wenty five Nebraskans joined with Guardsmen and Reservists from across the country as part of a special rotation of mentors sent to Afghanistan to provide training and doctrinal support to the Afghan National Army units that were in the field.

After returning home in February following a year-long deployment, the Soldiers who were a part of this special task force assignment have been eagerly telling their stories and the stories of the Afghan people to show others the important job the U.S. still has to do in Afghanistan.

“We have to help the Afghan Army become self-sufficient before we can pull out, and feel good about pulling out,” said Master Sgt. Brian Folts, a mentor for the ANA. “They need to be trained and able to provide sustainable security for the people of Afghanistan who are still threatened every day and night by fractions of the Taliban - no one wants to live like that.”

Folts, an operations sergeant for the 126th Chemical Battalion, said after catching wind of the mission in 2004, he immediately volunteered.

“These people are tired of war and living in such unsafe conditions. We can alleviate that and give the people a glimpse of hope and feeling of trust,” said Folts.

Folts and the other 24 Nebraska National Guardsmen joined 175 Guardsmen and Reservists from states as far away as Washington and Maine.

Col. Tom Schuurmans, a Nebraska Army Guardsman who served as the commander for the special task force, called the group a “witches brew” of



**Reward For A Job Well Done:** Sgt. Adam Schroeder (center) and an unidentified Guard Soldier are awarded for classroom instruction by members of the Afghan National Army. Both Guard Soldiers spent a year working in Afghanistan to help train members of the country’s new Army.

men because of the wide variety of people participating in a relatively small task force.

Once the “witches brew” of men was brought together and introduced to the overall mission, the Soldiers were broken into twelve teams of 16 men, said Folts.

“The Nebraska guys were really separated then,” said Folts. “It was like going to a completely new unit where you know no one.”

The Soldiers did have a chance to get to know each other during two months of training that focused on how to train

the ANA to become self-sufficient in the field. The training included some cultural and language training for the U.S. Soldiers as well.

Folts said the men continued to disperse once they arrived in Afghanistan and filtered throughout its five regions. The task force Soldiers were assigned to a battalion or brigade where two Americans became embedded trainers in companies of 60 Afghan soldiers.

“Our Soldiers were really stretched. They did an admirable job of stepping up to a higher level of responsibility,” said Folts.

*“Our Soldiers were really stretched. They did an admirable job of stepping up to a higher level of responsibility.”*

— **Sgt. Brian Folts**

Folts said that even though the ANA had been through basic training and advanced individual training schools they still had a lot to learn.

“They were really lacking in experience. We had to almost do their jobs for them so they had something to mirror,” said Folts.

Sgt. Adam Schroeder, a Nebraska Soldier in the 126th Chemical Battalion, said training the Afghans was one of the hardest jobs he had ever faced in the military.

“There was no way to prepare for it,” said Schroeder. “A different problem would happen everyday that you never would think could come about.”

Schroeder said that he not only taught the ANA about the Army, but had to teach them how to take care of themselves health-wise. Schroeder said one example of this would be when the ANA would prepare to go out on a mission in the 120 degree heat.

“They would eagerly load the vehicles to go fight, but when we would arrive at our destination they hadn’t packed any food or water,” said Schroeder. “This happened over and over – they just didn’t learn.”

Schroeder said he learned early on that he couldn’t expect even a certain

**See TRAINERS on 10.**





**Through The Mountains:** Staff Sgt. Dustin Young and other members of the Afghan National Army conduct a patrol through the rugged mountains of Afghanistan.



**Afghanistan's Future:** A row of Afghan kids stand near a mud wall while watching as American and Afghan National Army Soldiers work near their homes. Boys and girls are allowed to mix while young children, however once a girl reaches the age of 13, she is often segregated from the rest of society in many areas of the country.



**Dealing With Left Over War Material:** Rows of C-4 explosives are laid out as American demolition specialists prepare to destroy more than 4,000 mortar shells and rocket propelled grenades left over from one of Afghanistan's many recent wars.



**Winter Preparations:** Sgt. Adam Schroeder, Nebraska Army National Guard, works on the frame of a building in Afghanistan that will serve as Schroeder's "home away from home" during the approaching winter months in Afghanistan.

TRAINERS continued from page 9.

amount of knowledge from anyone, even the higher enlisted.

"We started from the bottom up and acted like they didn't have a clue on anything," said Schroeder. "It was like teaching first graders."

He added that the simplest of tasks had to be explained – like what soap is and how it is used.

Schroeder said that although the Afghan troops were slow at learning, they always gave 100 percent. "They are eager to fight and want to be able to take care of their families and friends," said Schroeder. "They are tired of being pushed around by the Taliban. That's why so many are going through basic training right now."

According to Folts, because the number of Soldiers going through training keeps growing, it has prompted the U.S. to send over more special task forces like his to help train the ANA.

"They are excited to fight and actu-

ally have a training program," said Folts. "It keeps their sons out of the clutches of the Taliban."

Folts said the basic training and AIT schools have only been established within the last three years.

"Before they would just grab volunteers, hand them a gun and tell them to go fight," said Folts. "This way is a lot better and it gives the Army more legitimacy."

Folts added that the growing number of Afghans willing to go through training shows that as a country, Afghanistan is stepping up more and more in the fight against the Taliban.

"The ANA is giving the country stability. I'm just glad that we had a chance to be a part of such an important mission," said Folts.

"It was life-changing for those of us who worked it and it is life-changing for so many more people who reside in Afghanistan."



**Desert March:** Afghan National Army and American Soldiers walk together through the beginnings of a rocky ravine while conducting a combat patrol maneuver in Afghanistan, part of a year-long mission to help build the new Afghan National Army.





Photo courtesy of Staff Sgt. Mark Sadd

**River Crossing, Afghanistan Style:** An Afghan civilian uses a makeshift device to cross a river in Afghanistan. One of the many problems facing American forces in Afghanistan is the fact that recent wars have destroyed much of the country's infrastructure.



Photo courtesy of Sgt. 1st Class David Davis

**Afghan Greeting:** Sgt. 1st Class David Davis (right) and Staff Sgt. Mark Sadd, members of the Nebraska Army National Guard, pose for a photo while training members of the new Afghan National Army. Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard from units across the Cornhusker state spent a year in Afghanistan deployed across the war-torn nation training the country's new soldiers.

## Nebraska Soldier awarded twice for battlefield heroism

By Sgt. Katie Loseke

Associate Editor

A Nebraska Army National Guardsman earned several commendations for bravery while serving in Afghanistan.

Staff Sgt. Mark Sadd, a squad leader with Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry, was awarded the Bronze Star with Valor device and an Army Commendation Medal with Valor device for his actions during two separate missions while serving in Afghanistan from February 2005 to February 2006.

"It makes you proud to recognized for this type of an award, but I was just doing my job and mostly trying to stay alive," said Sadd.

Sadd was part of a special unit made up of Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers from throughout Nebraska who mobilized in late 2004 for a year-long mission in Afghanistan where the Guardsmen helped train and mentor members of the new Afghan National Army.

Sadd said he never thought the mission would take the turns it eventually did.

"When I went over I thought all I would be doing was teaching them how to low crawl, do physical training, march and maneuver," said Sadd. "I hadn't really planned on getting into the situations I did."

What exactly were the situations he got into?

Sadd said his first extremely hairy situation came April 18, 2005, when his unit received a report that approximately 20 Taliban commanders in a particular province were plotting operations against U.S. Soldiers.

Hoping to catch the Taliban before they launched their attacks, Sadd and other U.S. Soldiers loaded onto helicopter while the ANA loaded onto another. The plan, said Sadd, was reasonably simple: the ANA were to assault the position while the mentors would provide back-up security.

"Once we got in the air things went awry and the whole business became more deadly for me in an instant," said Sadd.

According to Sadd positions got changed and when he and his fellow mentors jumped out of their Blackhawk they began immediately taking on small arms fire.

"Three Taliban soldiers ran up on

me and I killed them," said Sadd. "I knew it was them or me and I didn't hesitate."

Sadd said the situation became controlled quickly when Apache helicopters flew in to provide fire support. When the battle was done, 10 Taliban Soldiers were dead, four were wounded and 16 more had been captured. The ANA also found a cache of weapons including rocket launchers, improvised explosive device materials and \$170,000 worth of Pakistani money.

"These guys were getting ready to start something," said Sadd. "It's a good thing we got there when we did."

For his actions, Sadd was awarded the Army Commendation Medal with Valor device.

"I thought it was an honor to get an award like that," said Sadd. "Little did I know I would be earning the Bronze Star a couple months later for a different fight."

Sadd said his next brush with death came on August 9, 2005.

Sadd said he was training at a forward operating base when the call came in that another team was pinned down under enemy fire and had lost one American Soldier. Sadd said he and other Soldiers quickly loaded their vehicles and rolled out of the base at 6 p.m. with the hopes of rendezvousing with the trapped team around 10 a.m. the next morning.

"It was a long night, but we were ready for what awaited us," said Sadd. "The ANA was prepared to fight and all we wanted to do was get our guys out of there as fast as we could."

Sadd said the relief team arrived on schedule and could see the enemy on a hillside shooting down at U.S. Soldiers. Sadd said they narrowed the shooters down to two little spots and prepared to take them out. Suddenly, however, Sadd and the rest of the relief team began to take intense enemy fire.

"Out of nowhere came fire from every direction," said Sadd. "We were surrounded and suddenly fighting for our lives."

Sadd said the firing went on for over three-and-a-half hours before the Americans and ANA finally gained the upper hand and were able to free themselves and the pinned down team.

"When it was all said and done we had only lost that one American and ended with only four ANA soldiers wounded," said Sadd. "I think we did a good job."



Photo courtesy of Staff Sgt. Mark Sadd

**Booming Backdrop:** Staff Sgt. Mark Sadd, Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry, poses for a photograph as a mushroom cloud rises above the spartan Afghanistan landscape as American and Coalition forces destroy a weapons cache. Sadd earned both a Bronze Star with Valor device and Army Commendation Medal with Valor device during his one-year mission in Afghanistan where he helped train members of Afghanistan's new army.

Sadd didn't find out how good a job they had done until the next day when another unit went to survey the damage. That unit found over 200 dead Taliban soldiers littering the battlefield from the day before.

Sadd was credited for knocking out three rocket propelled grenade nests, two machinegun nests and awarded the Bronze Star for his actions.

"Again I wasn't expecting this," said

Sadd. "All I did was try to shoot them before they shot me. Any movement I shot, even if it was a flock of chickens."

Now that the deployment is over, the father of five and grandfather of two has returned home to Sutton to much calmer days. "Our mission was important and I feel like we made a difference. It is hard to move from the crazy battlefield environment to this, but I'm glad to be home."



## ‘All we could do was to try and be respectful’

### Guardsman learns value of family, friendship, respect following deadly airline crash

By **Sgt. Katie Loseke**

Associate Editor

Staff Sgt. Dustin Young, a carpentry masonry specialist with Training Site Command, embarked on his first deployment in December of 2004 and came back a changed man in February 2006.

Young was part of a special team of Nebraska Army Guardsmen from across the state who were sent to train and mentor members of the Afghan National Army in Afghanistan.

“It was an experience I never could have imagined,” said Young. “Everyday was different, new and full of the unexpected.”

As part of a small group of U.S. Forces that was responsible for giving the Afghan National Army additional training, Young participated in a number of real-world missions with the ANA. These missions took him everywhere within the borders of Afghanistan, including the east where he worked in Kabul, the northeast at Asadabad, the north near Mazar-e Sharif, and the

south near Nawbahar. The missions also put him in contact with Taliban small arms fire on a regular basis.

“We ran a variety of missions that changed on a day-to-day basis, but there is one mission that will always remain glued in my mind,” said Young.

It was a mission, Young said, that changed his perspective on life... a day in which he helped cleanup a deadly airplane crash in the mountains outside of Kabul.

Young said the crash happened shortly after he arrived in Afghanistan in February 2005.

According to Young, a civilian Afghan airline had been flying out of Kabul when the pilot began having problems with the low cloud cover. As the pilot made his way through the maze of clouds he didn’t realize how low he was flying and failed to reach an altitude high enough to clear mountains.

The plane hit 30 feet below the summit. All 220 passengers and crew members were killed instantly and the wreckage spread across the mountain top at 8,000 feet above sea-level.

“When you help with a task like this, it almost seems futile



Photo courtesy of Staff Sgt. Dustin Young

**Comrades In Arms:** Staff Sgt. Dustin Young (second from left) and a group of Marines enjoy a meal of barbecued goat cooked by members of the Afghan National Army while on duty in the mountains of Asadabad. In February 2005 Young and Marines like these were given a mission to recover the remains of victims of an aircraft crash in the mountains.

knowing that there are no survivors. I felt helpless knowing there was nothing I could do to save the lives of the people who were on the plane,” said Young.

Although Young couldn’t do anything to help the people who had been on the plane, he felt he had a duty to help deliver their bodies to their family members for closure.

“Our job was to salvage and recover bodies. It sounds pretty grim, but we knew it had to be done. It is definitely not something you expect to do ever,” said Young.

Young said the Soldiers and Marines he worked with searched the mountain top for any human remains and placed

them carefully into body bags, which were then taken by Turkish Black Hawk helicopters to Kabul so family members could identify their loved ones.

“I can’t imagine what the family members were going through. It was traumatizing enough for me to see the bodies in that type of position and I have worked at accident scenes before,” said Young. “It really makes you appreciate life and those around you.”

Young said by the end of the day everyone who had helped with the crash was worn out and very solemn.

“It was a tragedy. All we could do was try and be respectful and do the best job possible get-

ting them back to their families,” said Young. “We would want that if we were in the same situation.”

Although Young said he will always remember the mood of the crash and the events that happened that day, he is positive about his experience in Afghanistan.

“It wasn’t as bad as people make it out to be. Yeah, it got hairy and bad some days, but it was a great mission where we actually made a difference.”

“This is the best thing we could do for that country. We were teaching their Army how to be self-sufficient so one day we can all come home – it’s a win, win situation.”

## Soldier adds to grandfather title while in Afghanistan

By **Sgt. Katie Loseke**

Associate Editor

Before leaving the United States for a tour in Afghanistan, one Soldier kissed his family goodbye and waved to his granddaughters as he left, thinking it was the last time that he would be called grandpa for over a year.

Little did he know that he would become known as “Old Baba” (grandfather in Afghan) to nearly everyone, including the hundreds of Afghan Soldiers he would be working with daily.

Sgt. 1st Class David Davis, a personnel services sergeant with Scottsbluff’s 168th Quartermaster Battalion, volunteered for a special task force that trained members of the Afghan National Army in Afghanistan.

The task force was made up of Guardsmen and Reservists from across the United States, including 25 Nebraska National Guardsmen.

“Our mission was to teach the Afghan Soldiers how to take care of themselves and their country,” said Davis. “I didn’t know how important that mission was until I interacted and became invested in the lives of the civilians who lived there, especially the children.”

According to Davis, two American Soldiers would work with a company of Afghan Soldiers everyday. The Americans would teach them how to fight, live properly and run combat missions.

“We were teaching them how to do basic everyday functions that many of us take for granted,” said Davis. “Our roles as teachers and mentors were very important in teaching survival skills.”

Although Davis treasured his role as

a mentor, he said there was another role that he looked forward to playing while overseas as well – that of grandpa.

“They all called me Baba because I was so old. At first it started as a joke and then it became a term of endearment that everyone picked up,” said Davis.

Davis said most of the ANA referred to him as grandfather when they were waiting in line for pay. Davis worked as a pay agent in Afghanistan, compiling attendance records and handing out money.

“One of them said ‘Hey grandfather, you going to give me a little extra money this week,’ and it stuck from there,” said Davis. “I actually began to look forward to them calling me grandfather; it brought back a little piece of home.”

Being called grandfather was not the only thing that reminded Davis of home.

“Every time I saw those little kids standing next to the street or hanging around I thought of my grandkids. It would make me sick to imagine my granddaughters in this environment.”

Davis said the most heart wrenching thing he witnessed was the alienation of young girls who had just turned 13. According to Davis, as children, boys



Photo courtesy of Sgt. 1st Class David Davis

**Old Baba:** Sgt. 1st Class David Davis (rear) poses for a photo with a group of village kids near Yakdan, Afghanistan, in December 2005. Davis, a member of Scottsbluff’s 168th Quartermaster Battalion, became known as “Baba” while serving for a year in Afghanistan helping train members of the country’s new national army. “Baba” is an Afghan term meaning “grandfather.”

and girls played together, but as soon as a girl turned 13 they were downgraded to one step above goats.

“These girls were looked down upon simply because they had become women. It was sad,” said Davis.

“I tried to give them candy, but the boys would knock them down and take it after I left.”

Davis said giving treats was one of his joys while over there. He added that being a part of humanitarian missions was also rewarding.

“These people truly have nothing. At first they were scared of us, until we brought out the gifts, then they looked

at us like we were Santa Claus and they had just been given everything on their wish list,” said Davis.

Davis said interacting with Afghan civilians will be among the memories that he will always treasure.

“They were putting themselves and their families in danger by just being seen with an American Soldier, but they always made me feel welcome and I attended many teas with the locals,” said Davis.

Davis said he learned after his first tea experience to carry his own cup and spoon on him always.

“You never know when they will insist you join them for tea, but you do know that they all drink out of the same glass and use their hands to eat,” said Davis.

“Once you experience that, you are always prepared.”

Although Davis spent as much of his free time chatting with the locals as he could, he said he was often too busy running missions to really become immersed in the culture.

“We were constantly on the look out. It was uncommon to go a couple days without taking on small arms fire,” said Davis. “These people live and work in a war zone.”

Davis said he felt the mission made a difference in the lives of a lot of people living in Afghanistan.

“We gave them supplies and taught them how to maintain their own supplies and maybe gave a little hope to the people of Afghanistan by showing them kindness. Plus, everyone I came in contact with gained an extra grandfather that they know cares about them.”



# Beatrice selected for new reserve center

■ New \$11 million Armed Forces Readiness Center to replace aging Guard, Reserve armories in Beatrice, Fairbury, Falls City, Wymore

By Capt. Kevin Hynes  
Editor

The Nebraska National Guard announced June 16 that Beatrice, Neb., has been selected for a new \$11-13 million Armed Forces Readiness Center scheduled to be built in 2008.

"This new facility will benefit all of southeast Nebraska by providing a variety of opportunities for those interested in military operations," said Maj.

Gen. Roger Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska, in making the announcement.

The new Armed Forces Reserve Center will replace three aging Nebraska Army National Guard armories in Beatrice, Fairbury and Falls City, and a similar U.S. Army Reserve armory in Wymore.

The armory closings were recommended in the 2005 Base Realignment And Closure commission report released in September 2005, as a way to transform

reserve component facilities in southeast Nebraska, thereby enhancing military value and homeland defense capability, while also improving training and deployment potential.

According to Nebraska National Guard officials, the new, 63,000-square-foot Armed Forces Readiness Center will house 10 full-time Guard and Reserve staff members and approximately 280 part-time Soldiers who are currently assigned to the four affected ar-

mories.

"The Nebraska National Guard offered communities in the region the opportunity to propose locations and benefits," said Lempke.

"Beatrice was selected primarily on the basis of its proximity to secondary education and recruiting potential."

Guard officials expect to break ground on the new facility in mid-2008 with completion of the facility expected in late 2009 or early 2010.



**Training For Real World Missions, Dangers:** A simulated improvised explosive device detonates as a Army National Guard Hum-Vee passes by during a training exercise at Fort McCoy, Wisc., July 20. The training was part of a major National Guard Bureau sponsored joint exercise held this summer.

## Troops learn about roadside bomb dangers during Wisconsin training

By Spc. Sarah E. Stannard  
Detachment 1, 111th PCH

"Get out the way! Get out the way!" Soldiers yelled from the gun turrets of their M998 Hum-Vees as they rolled up to an intersection filled with other Soldiers dressed as civilians on the battlefield (COB).

Even though their hearts were pumping after having just "survived" an encounter with a simulated improvised explosive device (IED), Soldiers from the 126th Chemical Battalion, Nebraska Army National Guard, kept their eyes focused on the mission at hand as they continued to move through the convoy lanes of Fort McCoy, Wisc.

This might be training... but it was extremely important training.

As of early 2003, the United States Army estimated there were 10 million mines already in the ground in Iraq, 8 million of which were anti-personnel mines and the other 2 million being anti-tank mines.

With mines having been emplaced to protect their borders during the lengthy war with Iran in the 1980s, and again to ward off invasion during the Gulf war in 1990 and to subdue the Kurdish population, Iraq is considered the most heavily mined country in the world.

The U.S. Army reports, as of late 2003, 60 percent of all at-

tacks on Coalition forces were IEDs, and often included small arms fire immediately following explosion of the device.

Taking their cues from the urgency of the situation overseas, Soldiers participating in the National Guard Bureau's training exercise, Patriot 2006 refined the skills they've learned in previous training exercises, making them more capable to fight the United State's current Global War on Terror.

Soldiers encountered three scenarios on their 24 kilometer convoy route.

An IED explosion began the group's trek through the north training area, followed by an encounter with local nationals on the road side, who could've possibly been hostile, and an IED accompanied by small arms fire.

A group of civilians employed by the Department of Defense used pyrotechnics to simulate more accurately an IED explosion for the group.

"We always train like we flight," said Jessica Baker, one of the DoD civilians.

"With an IED we don't necessarily want to do that, so the fireworks at least give the feel-



U.S. Air Force photos

**Wisconsin Training:** Staff Sergeant Griffin, 1-167th Cavalry, takes up a defensive position during a convoy training exercise at Fort McCoy, Wisc., in July.

ing of an explosion. It will get your heart pumping, get some adrenaline going – and that's good training."

With IEDs causing the second most casualties to U.S. troops in Iraq, the group also trained on what to do should someone be wounded in an explosion.

Using an Air Force UH-1 Huey as a medical evacuation helicopter, the group assessed their simulated casualties, prepared them to be evacuated and called in the air ambulance.

The "train the way we fight" strategies learned at the Patriot exercise can not only refresh Soldiers on convoy tactics and IED awareness training, but ultimately could save their lives.

## Tiny Nebraska unit's bonds grow during South Dakota exercise

By Spc. Tegan Kucera  
Staff Writer

The 168th Quartermaster Battalion from the Nebraska Army National Guard learned there can be some hidden advantages when training with a shorthanded staff during a major exercise such as Joint Thunder 2006.

The battalion from Scottsbluff, Neb., deployed in June to Camp Custer, S.D., with just 12 of its potential 68 allotted Soldiers. Those that did participate in the annual training exercise soon discovered that job versatility and unit cohesiveness can improve when a unit is forced to work with just a fraction of its personnel.

"It's a lot more work load per person," said Staff Sgt. Rod Bussinger, a petroleum operations sergeant for the 168th. "We have to do maybe three or four different jobs and we have to work together a lot more."

Bussinger said the unit was

temporarily under-staffed because many Soldiers in the battalion volunteered to go overseas with other deployed units in the state.

He said there are only a few lower enlisted Soldiers currently in the unit.

"Our lower enlisted have learned a lot more because they're learning their job and everyone else's job while they are helping out," Bussinger said.

Even though the Soldiers now work a lot harder, Bussinger said the unit has a 100 percent retention rate. He said the unit has two Soldiers who came back from training just a month before the exercise and both attended Joint Thunder 2006.

"It's been a good experience so far," Bussinger said. "As for doing our wartime mission, this is probably the most realistic annual training that we have actually had where we were able to complete the task."

The 168th was responsible for keeping track of the amount of fuel used during Joint Thunder. The battalion was located at Forward Operating Base Dumont near Lead, S.D. .

One Soldier who enjoyed the training was Pfc. Fernando Rodriguez, a petroleum lab specialist with the 168th. He said he would rather be out in the field instead of stuck in a lab all the time.

"I've never been to something where I've gotten the chance to see Chinooks fly down and to see the fuelers do their job," Rodriguez said.

Rodriguez said the unit was close before Joint Thunder, but the Soldiers in the unit have become even tighter during the exercise.

"I love the people around here and we've grown to become somewhat of a family," Rodriguez said. "You get to know everyone's personal lives."

Sgt. Dustin Bauer, a petro-

leum surveillance sergeant with the 168th, said the operations tempo during Joint Thunder 2006 and the lack of personnel combined to make the whole unit more of a team during annual training, especially among the lower enlisted Soldiers.

"It's a little tougher, but I think everybody's doing a really good job," Bauer said. "All of the Soldiers are pulling their weight plus filling in wherever they have to and not really complaining about it, especially the lower enlisted."

"We've asked a lot out of them and they've stepped it up and made our jobs easier."

Bauer said the biggest advantage of a small unit is that everyone has an idea of what is going on.

Instead of many different people knowing about a small piece of the overall puzzle, all of the Soldiers tend to know details about the complete operation of the battalion.

"It makes things go a lot



Photo by Spc. Tegan Kucera

**Logging Miles In South Dakota:** A member of the 168th Quartermaster Battalion logs information during annual training at Camp Rapid, S.D. in June.

smoother out here in the field because one specific person does not have to be found and someone else can usually answer any question," Bauer said.



# Guardsmen called out to fight fires, heat near Chadron

By 1st Lt. Cole Kilpatrick

Historian, Staff Writer

Only 10 days after Nebraska Army National Guard helped extinguish flames in Valentine, Neb., Cornhusker Guardsmen were tapped once again to battle fires and triple-digit temperatures in northwest Nebraska when fires broke out near Harrison and Chadron.

The Nebraska Guardsmen joined forces with nearly 700 firefighters who were already in the area attempting to contain 20 wildfires burning in Dawes, Sioux and Banner counties. Five fires burned out of control when the Nebraska Army National Guard was tasked to provide the first of what would soon become a force of over 170 Guardsmen.

According to Lt. Col. Darin Krueger, task force commander, the Guardsmen worked well with the local firefighters.

"As soon as the local fire departments found out were available we got several requests for assistance," said Krueger.

The Soldiers played many roles while fighting the fire, said Staff Sgt. Sarah Pannill, a member of the 1057th Transportation Company based in Chadron and Scottsbluff, including digging preventative fire ditches to help contain the blaze. "In Harrison we worked with the local fire department and ranchers," said Pannill, "It went really well. It was interesting working with them. We melded together and worked."

Officials reported the fires were started by lightning strikes from passing thunderstorms. Help was stretched thin along the lines as South Dakota and Wyoming were engulfed in large fires as well. Several small towns had



Photo by Staff Sgt. Paul McFarland

**Heavy Load:** A Nebraska Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook helicopter lifts a Bambi bucket filled with water toward the Chadron fires in late July.

been put in danger when the Dawes county fire burnt over 30,000 acres of landscape.

Nebraska's aviation units took to the air again with the CH-47 Chinook crews recording almost over 30 hours with the UH-60 Blackhawk crews not too far behind on hours. According to Guard officials, helicopter crews combined to make 525 water drops putting almost 500,000 gallons of water on the ground.

Another big part of the mission was having the Soldiers help evacuate some of the towns. According to Krueger, Ne-



Photo by Jim Bunstock

**Nighttime Blaze:** Wild fires light up the sky near the Nebraska Army National Guard armory in Chadron as the blaze approaches the city, forcing officials to evacuate much of the community.

braska Army Guard Soldiers worked with the State Patrol at several road blocks to prevent people from going into a danger area. Guardsmen also provided patrols at night to assure no looting was taking place.

"The State Patrol worked well with us (and) gave us clear instructions so our Soldiers knew exactly what to do," said Krueger.

Chadron State College was among the many places that had to be evacuated when fires moved up within several football field lengths of the school before moving in a different direction. That particular fire struck home with many members of the 1057th Trans. Co., who live in or near the city.

According to officials many of the Soldiers did not have Red Card certification – meaning that they'd been trained to fight fires on federal land – before deploying to the fires. In order to

get the Soldiers prepared for the emergency, the Guardsmen attended an emergency Red Card training class before going out on the lines. The 267th Ordnance Company was one of these units. They were just finishing up their annual training when officials extended their orders another week to go fight the fires according to reports.

Approximately 10 units responded to the state emergency before the fires were finally brought under control in early August.

According to the Soldiers involved, it was an important and satisfying mission to be a part of.

"Knowing that you are out there helping the community and working together with the community towards a common goal and purpose, I think that really has an impact," said Pannill. "It is good for the community to see we are still there as a resource for them."

## FIRE DUTY continued from page 1.

residents, including patients at a nearby hospital.

Within hours after the fire broke out, Gov. Dave Heineman mobilized a number of state assets and organizations to help officials deal with the blaze, including members of the Nebraska National Guard.

"I want to assure the people of Valentine and Cherry County that Nebraska is paying close attention to the scale and scope of this natural disaster, and we will do all we can to assist regional firefighting efforts," said Heineman in announcing the mobilization of the Nebraska National Guard and other state emergency assets.

Among those initially responding to the emergency were dozens of fire departments, the Nebraska State Patrol, the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency and the Nebraska State Fire Marshal's Office's Wildland Incident Response and Assistance Team, which includes the Nebraska Forest Service.

The Guard's initial response came in the form of two Army Guard helicopters – a UH-60 Black Hawk from Lincoln and a CH-47 Chinook from Grand Island – both of which arrived on scene on July 18 and began aiding firefighters battling the blaze in the nearby rugged canyons and draws.

Although Nebraska Guard helicopters have helped fight wildfires in the past, this deployment was somewhat unique in

the fact that the UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter was actually a "loaner" from the Arizona Army Guard to replace Nebraska's Black Hawks which are currently deploying to Iraq, while this marked the first operational mission of the newly arrived CH-47 Chinook.

According to 2nd Lt. Dustin Wilkie, Chinook pilot, the CH-47 helicopter had an immediate impact with its ability to drop 2,000 gallons of water from its massive bambi bucket.

"They got the biggest bang for the buck with us going up in the canyons where the ground crews couldn't get into," said Wilkie. "In the afternoon we were only carrying 1,800 gallons of water, and it seemed to put quite a dent in the hot spots to help them (fire fighters) control it."

By July 18, much of the fire had been brought under control, however, because of high winds and triple digit temperatures, firefighters continued to have problems keeping local hotspots from erupting.

In order to aid the firefighters, 37 Soldiers from Chadron's 1057th Transportation Company and 13 Soldiers from Norfolk's 181st and 317th Engineer Detachments (Fire Fighting) were mobilized and sent to Valentine.

According to Earleywine, the Chadron Soldiers were all "red



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**Rugged Terrain:** A Nebraska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter drops water onto a hot spot in the rugged canyons near Valentine, Neb., July 17. Nearly 60 Nebraska Guardsmen were called up in mid-July to battle fires near the northcentral Nebraska town.

card holders," meaning that they'd been trained and certified to fight fires on federal park land. They worked with Norfolk Soldiers who were equipped with two massive, all-terrain fire trucks. Like the CH-47 crew, this was the first operational mission of the two Norfolk fire fighting teams.

According to Spc. Daniel Prather of the 181st Eng. Det., the deployment of the Norfolk crews was a true test of the new unit's capabilities and ability to rapidly respond to a state emergency.

"We had people that were pretty well scattered out all over the state. A lot of my Soldiers were from Lincoln, Omaha, and

Fremont," said Prather. "We put the alert out at (9 a.m.) and left at (1 p.m.) on Monday. Everyone just kind of dropped everything they had going and got here."

The Guard additionally sent a fuel truck and crew from Lincoln to assist with the aviation effort.

Once in Valentine, the Soldiers joined more than 140 firefighters from 47 Nebraska and South Dakota fire departments, who had responded to the emergency.

By the evening of June 18, most flare ups had been contained and fresh fire departments arrived giving the Guard, State Patrol, and Valentine fire departments their first rest.

According to Wilkie, the mission was truly a state-wide effort, adding "that community really rallied around everyone. The fire hall was packed full of volunteers bringing Gatorade and water to keep everyone going, we got a ton of support from the community and everyone was really nice."

Heineman also noted the state-wide cooperation after visiting Valentine on July 17.

"This is Nebraska at its best," said Heineman in a new release issued by the Governor's Office. "Even in this difficult situation of extreme heat coupled

with the unpredictability of fighting a canyon fire, there are 30 department and more than 140 firefighters from both Nebraska and South Dakota towns working through the night to contain this fire."

By the afternoon of June 19, fears again rose as high winds and continued triple digit temperatures caused local officials to worry that the fire might again move up through canyons leading directly back into town.

The hard work of the 181st and 317th crews paid off during this time.

"We weren't in a battle for the blaze by any means, but we were definitely a big part of the preventative from it getting started again," said Prather.

"They (the locals) were very supportive; we worked very well with the volunteer department there. They had people constantly bringing in food, water and Gatorade, they were very supportive."

By the end of the day the fire was contained and controlled.

By the morning of July 20, all National Guard Soldiers were released to their home units. According to Earleywine the UH-60 and CH-47 crews dumped over 200,000 gallons of water during the operation.

"It was nice to be able to use these Ch-47s, to be able to help out a state mission," said Wilkie. "We worked well with the civilian authorities and they worked well with us."



# September air show will have green shade as well

By **Spc. Tegan Kucera**  
Staff Writer

The Army National Guard is hoping to plant seeds of knowledge this year at the Guardians of Freedom air show in September by showing the various pieces of equipment Nebraska Soldiers use to complete both their federal and state mission.

The idea is to give people – particularly younger air show visitors – a snapshot of what the Army Guard does, said Sgt. Maj. Barney Solomon.

“A lot of the general public there will get to see equipment that the Army has and hopefully they will gain an interest,” Solomon said.

Many units will be showing some of the equipment they use including chemical and aviation units as well as counter drug and the Civil Support Team (CST). They will show equip-

## Guardians of Freedom Air Show

September 23-24  
Gates open 9:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
Featuring:  
U.S. Navy Blue Angels  
U.S. Army Golden Knights  
Tora! Tora! Tora!  
F-16 Demonstration Team  
Shockley Jet Truck

ment as well as putting on a sling load demonstration.

The Army Guard is also sponsoring the U.S. Army Golden Knights Parachute Team, the Army’s premier airborne demonstration team, which will be making several jumps throughout the Sept. 23-24 weekend.

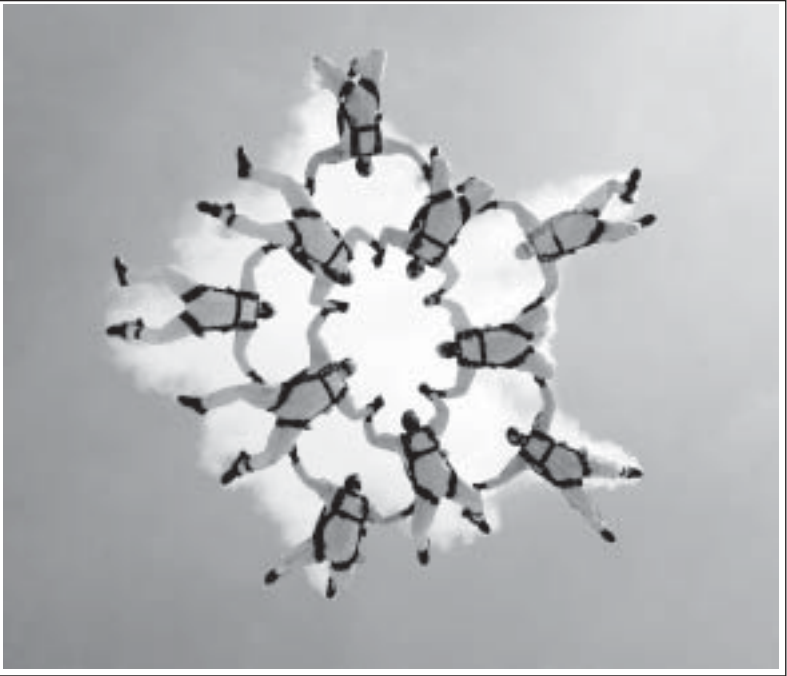
Solomon is hoping for a big crowd and thinks the University football game may also help because people may go to air show before the game.

And with those crowds, Guard recruiting officials see the air show as an opportunity to possibly raise interest in serving in the organization.

“We expect most people attending will be pro-military and that they would be good candidates to become member of the Nebraska National Guard,” said Lt. Col. Jim Murphy, State Recruiting and Retention commander.

But the air show is not just about recruiting, said Murphy, adding it is just as important for the community to know what the Guard does to ensure continued support.

“Our biggest goal is for people from the community to understand the missions and some of the benefits of the Nebraska Nation Guard,” Murphy said. “We would love for people to sign up, but we are realistic enough to know an event like this is more about the informa-



U.S. Army photo

**Heading Toward Lincoln:** Members of the U.S. Army Golden Knights fly in formation during a parachute jump in 2005. The prestigious parachute team is coming to Lincoln, Sept. 23-24, for the “Guardians of Freedom” air show.

tion and getting it out.”

This is the first time in many years that both the Army and Air National Guard will be involved in presenting an air show. Murphy said it shows how much of a joint organization both the Nebraska Air and

Army National Guard have become.

The air show being held to help recruiting and to support the community, it also helps the Army and Air become one. It is an event that many will find fun entertainment.

## BIRTHDAY continued from page 1.

Omaha, Neb. At the time of its federal recognition, Nebraska became only the second state in the country to have an Air Guard unit.

According to the unit’s current commander, Nebraska Air Guardsmen have been stepping up ever since.

“We were one of the first Air National Guard units and we consistently stand up and meet the challenges that are placed before us,” said Col. Steven L. Adams, current commander of the 155th ARW.

“As the wing commander and watching what all of our folks do, especially now in the War on Terror, the 60th anniversary just reinforces what a great organization we have.”

Throughout the year, the Nebraska Air National Guard has conducted events to celebrate the anniversary and still has some things planned for the rest of the year.

The largest and most public event is the “Guardians of Freedom” air show which will be held Sept. 23-24 at Lincoln’s Air Park. The air show will be

the biggest in the Nebraska region this year, said Lt. Col. Keith Schell, air show director.

The event, which is hosted by the Nebraska Air National Guard and the Lincoln City Chamber of Commerce with support from the Nebraska Army National Guard, will have something for everyone, said Schell.

The air show will feature the U.S. Navy Blue Angels, the U.S. Army Golden Knights parachute team, Tora! Tora! Tora!, the Shockley jet truck, numerous other aerial demonstrations and static displays of aircraft, military equipment and automobiles from this generation and previous ones.

In addition to the air show, the Nebraska Air National Guard also celebrated its 60th birthday during a military ball held Feb. 4 in downtown Lincoln. Among the many activities held during the ball was a video montage of the Nebraska Air National Guard’s past.

Along with the military ball, the Air Guard also sponsored a 60th Anniversary exhibit at the

Strategic Air and Space Museum located near Mahoney State Park, and held a contest in Hastings to design a picture to use as “nose-art” on a Nebraskan KC-135R Stratotanker.

The Nebraska Air National Guard began when it was federally recognized on July 26, 1946 after inspections were conducted by the 2nd Air Force out of Offutt Air Force Base.

In September, 1946, the Nebraska Air National Guard started to receive aircraft, and moved from its armory at 24th and O streets to the Lincoln Army Air Field, which had been deactivated from federal service. The Nebraska Air National Guard was initially comprised of 17 officers and 100 enlisted members.

In 1948, Nebraska was one of the first five states to receive the F-80 Shooting Star jet aircraft. The Nebraska Air National Guard also held its first annual training in Lincoln that same year.

One of the Nebraska Air National Guard hangars was destroyed by fire in March 1949.

All records and equipment in the hangar were lost including two B-26s that were used to tow targets for air-to-air gunnery. There were no injuries in the fire.

One month later the Air Guard was back for Operation Snowbound, an airlift of food and hay for farm families and livestock isolated by a severe blizzard in western Nebraska.

The unit was mobilized on April. 1, 1951, and put into active service for the Korean conflict as part of the 132nd Fighter-Bomber Wing at Dow AFB, Bangor, Maine. The following year, the wing moved to Alexandria AFB, La., where it completed its tour of active duty.

The unit was released from active duty on Dec. 31, 1952, after 21 months of meritorious service. The unit flew P-51s throughout its tour of active duty. The F-80s had been given to the Air Defense Command during the Korean Conflict and would not return to the unit until the fall of 1953.

In 1953, the 173rd FS began flying F-80 fighters.

Over the years the unit designator and aircraft flown have changed in order to meet the demands of the Air Guard. The Nebraska Air National Guard has primarily used the following aircraft in the years since its inception: the F-80, F-86, the RF-84, the RF-4, and most recently the KC-135.

In its 60-year history, the Nebraska Air National Guard has served in a variety of roles ranging from fighters to reconnaissance to aerial refueling unit.

Most recently, the 155th ARW has performed refueling missions in Turkey, Guam, Spain and many other locations around the globe in support of the nation’s ongoing commitments.

“What’s significant to me is how our roles have changed over the years and through it all the Nebraska Air National Guard has always been there when called,” said Adams.

“If you look at our history, it was back from to Korea all the way up to now, no matter what it was we’ve met the call.”

# Top chief tells Airmen opportunities available in challenging times ahead

By **Chief Master Sgt. Vicky Cerino**  
Staff Writer

His reign as the ninth command chief master sergeant of the Air National Guard has been defined by one of the most challenging times in the organization’s history.

Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), the war, deployments, and employer, family and recruiting and retention issues are just some of the things he deals with day-to-day at the Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C.

Recently Chief Master Sgt. Richard Smith paid a visit to the Nebraska Air National Guard base in June to meet with people and learn about the unit.

During a meeting of the chiefs on base, Smith, who is responsible for all affairs concerned with the enlisted personnel of the Air National Guard, talked about a variety of issues beginning with BRAC. He said 26 of 88 Guard units now have no airplanes as a result of BRAC.

“In my opinion, it’s the largest single thing to hit the Air National Guard. We

want to keep the air in the Air National Guard,” Smith said.

“In essence, you’re going to have 17 flying units with an average of 1,000 people with no aircraft. These are really difficult and challenging times,” Smith said.

In relation to what’s ahead, particularly for those units, he talked about what he calls the challenges of the three Rs: retrain, relocate and retire.

He said relevancy plays a role in BRAC. “Relevant needs to be the key or we no longer exist. You are relevant. You have the best training and best equipment as good as or better than the active duty.”



Photo by Master Sgt. Alan Brown

**Command Time:** Chief Master Sgt. Richard Smith (far right) visits with Tech. Sgt. Mike Hines (far left) and Maj. Jay Ritten of the 155th Medical Squadron.

“Any organization that doesn’t keep itself relevant is at risk. Corporately for the Guard we have a tremendous amount of shifting happening. For example, with aircraft conversions... this means retirements on a mass scale,” Smith said.

Because of new missions, he said the Air Guard stayed the same size through the BRAC.

But currently a plan is being proposed to reduce the Air Force by 40,000 and 48,000 personnel, and the Air National Guard, 14,464.

The largest part of the Air Force budget is personnel, so that’s the only way to recap...is through reducing numbers, Smith said.

“With that reduction, we cannot do what we’re doing now,” Smith said. “That’s the stalemate we’re at now. That’s being fought on your behalf. The people at the Bureau are working on these things to maximize how we can keep our people. It’s important to us and

to the Air National Guard.”

Smith said with change also comes opportunity.

“We need to take this as an opportunity, not a negative event. There’s going to have to be some choices made. At the end of all of this, we’ll be a better, stronger Guard,” Smith said.

He said the Air Guard will see associate units that are managed by the Air Guard and Air Force, with Air Force working for Guard and vice versa. In July during a ceremony in Cheyenne, Wyo., the Air Force’s 30th Airlift Squadron became the first active-duty associate squadron to form a partnership between Air Mobility Command and the Wyoming Air National Guard.

Chief Master Sgt. Barb Gossage said Chief Smith’s visit was valuable from many different aspects.

“It was important to have a high level enlisted leader talk to our people about Air Guard enlisted issues being addressed at the National Guard Bureau,” Gossage said.

“He answered a lot of questions from people and provided good, honest insight of issues.”





## Guard Family NEWS You Can Use

# Fighting post-deployment stress means adjustments

By Maj. Drey Ihm

Family Program Office

**E**xperience has shown that virtually all service members returning from deployment, and their household members, experience at least a little uneasiness as they readjust to their normal environment.

Changes, some more subtle than others, have taken place during the deployment for the service member, his or her family, and their friends and colleagues.

To successfully cope with change requires making corresponding adjustments in attitude, thought and behavior.

### Building Block or Stumbling Block?

While transitioning back to pre-deployment environment, whenever you begin to feel angry or frustrated, ask yourself:

How realistic are my expectations in this situation?

Am I giving myself, and others,

enough time and space to adjust?

Am I trying to force readjustment rather than being patient and allowing it to happen at a comfortable pace?

Remember that readjusting to home and work life is a process, not an event.

As the service member reintegrates into her or his family, work, and social environments, it makes sense to allow oneself and others appropriate time and space. In so doing, you will probably find that in a few weeks everything is back to a comfortable pattern again.

In the unlikely event, however, that after two to four weeks you are consistently feeling sad, having marital difficulties, having problems with sleep or appetite, having difficulty in concentration, using alcohol excessively, or are experiencing any other form of significant discomfort, please seek assistance.

Remember, any deployment during a relationship can be a *building block* or a *stumbling block*. It is up to the partners involved.



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

## Kids experience taste of Guard life

**Welcome Home:** Kids are welcomed home by sign-wielding parents following the first-ever Nebraska National Guard Kids Mobility Day held Aug. 5 in Lincoln. The day was designed to give Guard children a taste of military life. Look for story and photos in the October 2006 *Prairie Soldier*.

## What's New: Tricare Reserve Select now available

(From a National Guard Bureau fact sheet): All Selected Reserve members will be able to purchase their health care through TRICARE (regardless of duty status) with coverage beginning Oct. 1.

Although the health benefit is the same, there are three different tiers. Each tier has its own qualification requirements.

Like the health benefit program for federal civilian employees, Selected Reserve members who want to purchase TRICARE coverage must pay a portion of the premiums. The share of the premium paid by the member depends on the tier.

### What is the TRICARE benefit I would get?

- TRICARE Standard—if seen by a TRICARE certified/authorized provider;

- TRICARE Extra—if seen by a TRICARE in-network provider ;

- TRICARE Standard and TRICARE Extra each have deductible and co-payment requirements;

- Deductible: (per person/per family): E-5 and above: \$150 / \$300 E-4 and below: \$50 / \$150. Co-payments (per visit): 20 percent of allowed charges for covered service (TRICARE Standard) 15 percent of negotiated fee (TRICARE Extra).

### What are the three tiers?

#### TRS Tier 1

- Tier 1 is for Reserve component members who have served in support of a contingency operation (such as Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom);

- For each 90 consecutive days of active duty in support of a contingency operation, the member may purchase one year of TRS Tier 1 coverage.

### What changed in 2006 for TRS Tier 1?

- When a TRS Tier 1 participant

is ordered to active duty for more than 30 days, the TRS coverage is suspended and the termination date of the TRS coverage is extended by the period the member was covered by a non-premium TRICARE program so the member has full TRS Tier 1 coverage period;

- If a member serves another period of qualifying active duty and elects to purchase a second period of TRS Tier 1 coverage, the second (or subsequent) period of TRS Tier 1 will begin at the end of the first TRS Tier 1 period or the end of the second transition health care period, whichever is later—rather than the two periods running concurrently;

- A member now has 90 days after release from active duty to make a decision about participating in TRS and entering into a service agreement. (Previously, the member had to make a decision prior to being released from active duty and enter into a service agreement).

- Since the member is required to serve in the Selected Reserve, Individual Ready Reserve members who served on active duty in support of a contingency operation now have one year to find and occupy a position in the Selected Reserve. (TRS coverage begins after the member begins serving in the Selected Reserve.)

- The family of a member who was covered under TRS Tier 1 may retain Tier 1 coverage (or may purchase coverage if an eligible dependent) for up to six months following the death of the member;

- It was clarified that the TRS benefit includes access to military treatment facilities on a space available basis and access to the pharmacy benefit.

### Tier 2 Qualification Requirements

- The member must meet one of the

following criteria: Eligible Unemployment Compensation Recipient Employer does not offer an employee health plan; not eligible to participate in employer health plan or self-employed.

- The member must enter into a service agreement each calendar year in which the member agrees to serve in the Selected Reserve for the period of TRS Tier 2 coverage. (1)

#### Tier 3 Qualification Requirements

- The member must enter into a service agreement each year in which the member agrees to serve in the Selected Reserve for the period of TRS Tier 3 coverage.

As a one-time exception to the annual service agreement requirement, a member who wishes to purchase TRS Tier 2 or Tier 3 coverage for 2006 and 2007 may enter into a service agreement that coverage the period Oct. 1, 2006, to Dec. 31, 2007.

A member who purchased TRS Tier 2 coverage must continue to meet the qualification criteria (e.g., not covered by an employer health plan, self-employed, etc.) during the entire period of TRS Tier 2 coverage.

### Where can I find more information about the TRICARE Reserve Select Program?

Additional information about TRS can be found at: [www.tricare.osd.mil/reserve/reserveselect/index.cfm](http://www.tricare.osd.mil/reserve/reserveselect/index.cfm)

The personnel policy guidance pertaining to TRS is available at: [www.defenselink.mil/ra/documents/TRS\\_PolicyGuidance.pdf](http://www.defenselink.mil/ra/documents/TRS_PolicyGuidance.pdf)

You can contact the representative for your Reserve component. Contact information for each Reserve component is available at: [www.defenselink.mil/ra/html/tricare.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/ra/html/tricare.html)

# Voting in 2006

## ■Nebraska Guard members encouraged to vote in upcoming general election

By John Gale

Nebraska Secretary of State

**T**he Nov. 7, 2006, Nebraska general election is approaching quickly.

As Secretary of State, I serve as chief election officer for Nebraska. We have just spent three years implementing all of the mandated changes under the Help America Vote Act of 2002.

One of my priorities is to insure that our military personnel have every possible option to receive and cast a ballot, and have their ballots counted.

Armed Forces Voters Week is Sept. 3-9, 2006, which provides me this opportunity to address each of you and encourage our service men and women to exercise their right to register and to vote.

Our service personnel are helping to preserve and defend our freedoms, but need to vote to preserve our democracy as well.

I want to make sure that Nebraska military personnel have the chance to vote, wherever they are residing. I want to make a special outreach effort in light of the many deployments of Reserve and National Guard units."

One way for Nebraskans deployed either stateside or in foreign countries to apply to vote is to complete a Federal Post Card Application (FPCA), which can be used for registering to vote and/or requesting an early voting ballot.

For those who have applied previously, early voting ballots will be sent out in late September.

For those who have applied previously but their address has changed, contact their county election office to update their address.

Nebraska law allows a person to receive a blank ballot by fax. However, the law does not allow for a voted ballot to be returned by fax.

A county election office must receive an early voting ballot before the close of polls on Nov. 7 for the ballot to be counted. On Election Day polling places are open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Central Standard Time or 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Mountain Standard Time.

Serving our country requires many sacrifices and imposes numerous burdens for our military personnel. Their service is deeply appreciated by us all, and we want to help them to preserve their rights as citizens while they are serving.

Military personnel currently not deployed are also encouraged to participate in the electoral process. You can request an early voting ballot by mail, vote early in person at your county official's office or vote at your assigned polling place on Election Day.

Information on overseas voting, including the FPCA form and telephone numbers for county election offices, is available at [www.sos.state.ne.us](http://www.sos.state.ne.us).

Questions may be directed to the Secretary of State's Office at (402) 471-2555 or county election offices.

Through the Voting Information Center you can hear messages from Secretary Gale and the Nebraska Congressional Delegation at 800-438-8683 or DSN 425-1584.



# Leaders must learn important lesson: Words do count

Perhaps nothing serves a leader better than the ability to clearly and concisely articulate expectations with enthusiasm and a sense of urgency.

After all, convincing others to do something and do it correctly is what leadership is all about.

Carefully crafted written words can become timeless expressions of guidance (witness our Constitution). Unfortunately, the luxury of time is not always available to put everything down in writing. Sometimes face-to-face is the best and only way to make a point.

But just as a writer can sit and stare at a blank page for hours awaiting inspiration, so can we become tongued-tied or have our mouth get ahead of our brain. When this happens people all too often resort to profanity, crude colloquialisms, and emotionally charged phrases—the first things that pop into the head.

The problem of course is that bad language can be taken in many different ways. For a leader this can be disastrous.

A recent newspaper article recounted a military action in Iraq where innocent civilians were probably executed (yes, I use this term as intended) by young American Soldiers egged on by battlefield language taken too literally.

Told that all men in the area of operations were enemies and should be killed and to take no prisoners, the Soldiers became confused when they did actually take prisoners. Amid the uncertainty and confusion of battle, fed by continued bellicose language from superiors unsuitable for print here, the Soldiers are suspected of actually “releasing” the prisoners and then shooting them as they ran away.

Reconstructing events from the heat of battle is always difficult; and who can say definitively

what motivated the Soldiers to allegedly perform such egregious acts. But part of the blame is being laid at the feet of their leaders who resorted to “locker room” crudities to articulate mission intent instead of clear, professional language.

I try to avoid using crude language, even in private (with emphasis on the “try.”) At one time my verbal repertoire was full of “colorful” words and phrases. But over time two realizations became abundantly apparent.

First, the wonderfully flexible and expansive English language provides anyone of reasonable intelligence the capability to express concise points clearly and forcefully without resorting to vulgarities. Profanity, vulgar phrases and the like have no real meaning save as expressions of emotion (which is sometimes construed as “losing it.”)

myself without using “locker room” language.

Second, vulgarities that are part of the natural speech pattern unknowingly sneak out at inopportune times even when great care is attempted to control their use.

How often have people of some notoriety ruined their smooth facade by inadvertently falling back on bad habits and bad language during unguarded or highly emotional moments? Words do count—a well placed series of “expletives deleted” has toppled more than a few prominent leaders.

The American public has become sensitized to various terms and phrases. Some call it political correctness. Strong but crude words meant to convey frustration can be misinterpreted as threats.

Pop off that you might kill

someone during a heated moment and you can find yourself up on charges. Spouting something like “I wish I had a bomb” while standing frustratingly in a long screening line at the airport when you’re late for a flight will get you detained and in big trouble.

Words once spoken are irretraceable. The best one can hope for is time to more fully explain what was really meant—sometimes this helps, sometimes matters are made only worse.

In tense situations the balance between reason and emotionalism is tenuous. Emotionally threatened, we often revert to our most basic banal instincts—dogs bark, cats hiss, birds clatter, and humans cuss.

An effective leader learns to use strong but professional language in situations demanding stern and straight forward talk. I say “learn” because it doesn’t come naturally.

Words do count—make them count!

## Warrant Officers must strive to be loyal, faithful Soldiers

It’s a long KC-135 Tanker ride to Incirlik Air Base, Turkey.

13 hours long to be exact. I was advised to take a sleeping bag because the airplane gets cold at 35,000 feet, to take some snacks, something to read, and maybe a DVD player to help pass the time watching a movie. I was lucky to have wingmen like Command Chief Master Sergeant Brad Novak and Lt. Col. Rick Dahlman.

Because it was Father’s Day we decided to take an exciting taxi cab ride into Adana, Turkey. I purchased some Turkish pistachios for the state command sergeant major and a Turkish rug for my wife. We enjoyed a nice Turkish diner meal at the Happy House with some extra special tea.

Since I’m a member of the Joint Force Headquarters, I was invited to attend briefings concerning the Nebraska Air Guard deployment, mission operations, maintenance and supply. I’m proud to say our Air National Guard brothers and sisters are very professional and they are performing a valuable mission in Turkey.

It was an honor and a privilege to be included in this Joint Force visit to Air Guard troops in Turkey.

After a couple of days of hard work and a little fun it was time for the 13-hour tanker ride back home again. It was one of the great military experiences of my lifetime and I’m grateful for the opportunity.

During the past several months we have welcomed 19 Soldiers to the Nebraska Army National Guard Warrant Officers Corps and several more are interested in joining.

I must inform all new warrant officer candidates and newly appointed officers that you have earned the right to join a group of officers unique in the Nebraska Army National Guard. You are now members of a corps of officers with a distinct history and a proud tradition of serving our commanders, leaders and fellow Guardsmen.

I encourage you to become the best aviator or subject matter technical service warrant officer that you can be and build on this history by establishing your own reputation for competence and professionalism. I would like you to consider and put into practice some principles that I think will help you during your warrant officer career.

Be faithful about being a loyal professional Soldier. Make sure you are loyal to the organization and loyal to your boss. Be a Soldier that is known for having honesty and integrity. Never

### Chief’s Business

By Chief Warrant Officer Steve Weber  
Command Chief Warrant Officer

compromise your integrity by doing something that you wouldn’t want to read about in the newspaper.

Remember to do what’s right for all the right reasons.

Be dedicated to the mission and be known as somebody who can be relied upon. Take pride in being the “go to person.” Be technically and tactically proficient. This will require you to continue your military and civilian education at every opportunity.

All warrant officers should be striving for an associate’s degree by the time they are promoted to chief warrant officer three and a bachelor’s degree by the time they are promoted to chief warrant officer four.

Be a Soldier who is known as a trusted advisor.

Be a warrant officer who commanders actively seek for advice and counsel because they know they can trust and rely upon your guidance and your experience.

Be a person who respects all members of the team and take care of all soldiers in your charge.

Be a leader who leads by example with confidence.

If you strive to practice these fundamental leader values, I’m confident that you will have a long exemplary military career.

As we continue to build our warrant officer corps let’s remember to keep in mind General Lempke’s top two priorities for 2006. Let’s help recruit new Soldiers into a great organization. Let’s continue to focus on the retention of all Soldiers.

All of us must be responsible and accountable for growing and making this the best Army National Guard in the nation.

I’d like to personally congratulate Pvt. Jeff Kane for enlisting in the Nebraska Army National Guard with the 1-167th Cavalry. Jeff’s brother, Sgt. Steve Kane, is currently serving with the 1-167th Cavalry (Reconnaissance, Surveillance and Target Acquisition) at Camp Anaconda, Iraq.

Many young Nebraskans have joined the ranks of the Nebraska Army National Guard this year and I want to thank all new recruits for joining a great team. Thank you for all that you are doing and thank you for volunteering to serve your country and your state.

## Tips to enjoy September’s ‘Guardians of Freedom’ air show

As many of us look forward to the 2006 “Guardians of Freedom” air show it’s important that everyone remember some simple air show etiquette items to make everyone’s experience enjoyable and safe.

You should allow sufficient time to park and/or get to the show site itself. Expect some delays and adjust your times accordingly.

Parking at the event is made easy by the numerous security personnel. If not sure where you should park, the friendly people with the bright vests will help you along. Lincoln Police Department parking patrols are also instructed to tow improperly parked vehicles immediately, so be careful where you park your car.

The most obvious rule is “No guns, knives, or weapons” of any kind. Again, remember air show security is similar to airport security and infractions will be dealt with in a similar matter. Air show security personnel will also be accompanied by Lincoln Police Department officers or other local law enforcement personnel.

Please make sure to leave the family pets at home or with the neighbors. Pets are not allowed into the air show.

Coolers are not allowed at the air show for security reasons. However, you can bring baby foods or formulas, and there is a variety of food and drinks for everyone else at the air show.

Backpacks, briefcases, duffel bags, satchel bags, etc., will not be allowed onto the air show grounds, but diaper bags and women’s purses will be allowed and will likely be searched by security personnel. Please remember that security personnel reserve the right to hand search all bags. If planning on bringing a “bag”, the search is quick and simple, similar to airline screening.

Bicycles, skateboards and skates can compromise the safety of spectators and therefore these are not allowed either. Since you shouldn’t be “riding” around the air show, please make sure you wear comfortable walking shoes and are prepared to do a lot walking as there will be many aircraft and displays to see.

Also free to bring a lawn chair to sit on and enjoy the show. A pair of sunglasses will help you see the exciting aerial performances.

Alcohol is not allowed inside the Air Show and violators may be cited by local law enforcement and will likely be escorted out of the area.

Please keep in mind that all air shows, especially at military facilities, have “Restricted” or “Off-Limits” areas. These areas are very well marked, and a good rule

### Protecting Yourself

By Master Sgt. Jason Schroeder  
Air Guard Anti-Terrorism/Force Protection Office

of thumb is “when in doubt, stay out”.

Although every pilot participating in an air show assumes some level of risk, regulations ensure the audience is kept safe. The show line (e.g. the aerobatic box) is situated in such a way that aircraft do not maneuver over the audience.

Although they appear exciting, these maneuvers are well within the capabilities of the pilots and their aircraft. Everyone must stay west of the show fence at all times to remain clear of the show box.

Smokers will need to exit the air show to enjoy their preferred nicotine product. There will be designated smoking areas available off Air Show grounds by each entry point. You don’t want to be standing under the wing of a plane with hundreds of gallons of fuel and light up a cigarette.

If caught smoking inside the air show, you’ll most likely be contacted by security personnel and possibly escorted off the grounds.

Strict safety and security control of pedestrian and vehicle traffic, as well as unauthorized viewing will be enforced by security and local law enforcement personnel. Please don’t stop along Highway 34, Interstate 80 or any other congested roadway.

Security staff also need your help, and ask that if spectators see anything suspicious (i.e. people watching security personnel more than the show, placing suspicious packages, etc.) they immediately advise the nearest security or law enforcement personnel.

Trash is a constant problem at air shows and volunteers work continuously to keep the grounds clean before, during and after the event. If leftover trash or debris gets sucked in to an engine, it will cause serious problems for the pilot as well as the plane. There will be trash containers located everywhere inside and outside the grounds.

Finally, when you leave the show, be patient, there are only three ways out of the area. You along with the rest of the spectators will likely want to leave the air show at the same time. Unfortunately, traffic can only move so quickly.

Take your time and get home safely. Please contact the following for more information: Capt. Ryan Earleywine, Nebraska Army National Guard, (402) 309-7406. Master Sgt. Jason Schroeder, Nebraska Air National Guard Antiterrorism Noncommissioned Officer, (402) 309-1565.



PROMOTIONS

**Army National Guard**  
**Colonel**  
Douglas R. Wilken

**Lieutenant Colonel**  
Darin M. Krueger

**Major**  
Craig W. Strong

**First Lieutenant**  
Patrick D. Barger

**Chief Warrant Officer Four**  
Thomas W. Cerny

**Chief Warrant Officer Three**  
Mark D. Roland

**Chief Warrant Officer Two**  
Daniel D. Kincheloe

**Warrant Officer One**  
Justin K. Chadwick  
Stephen C. Gonifas

AWARDS

**Army National Guard**  
**Legion of Merit**  
Col. Mark A. Voichoski

**Meritorious Service Medal**  
Maj. Jeffrey L. Strong  
Chief Warrant Officer Garryll L. Wubbels  
Chief Warrant Officer Gerry L. Tice  
Command Sgt. Maj. Eric W. Maynard  
Sgt. Maj. Stephen F. Whitmore  
1st Sgt. John L. Moyes  
Sgt. 1st Class Dorrance E. Atherton  
Sgt. 1st Class Eric L. Riley  
Sgt. 1st Class Rodney T. Stuart  
Sgt. 1st Class Carl F. Ulm  
Staff Sgt. Byron J. Davis  
Spc. Michael L. Hytrek

**Army Commendation Medal**  
1st Lt. Troy W. Dannehl  
Staff Sgt. Desirae T. Dockter  
Spc. Jerad E. Blocker  
Maj. Steven R. McClure  
Chief Warrant Officer Daniel N. Hill  
Sgt. 1st Class Barry L. Read  
Sgt. 1st Class Pamela R. Whisenhunt  
Sgt. Joseph A. Yates

**Military Outstanding**  
**Volunteer Service Medal**  
Sgt. 1st Class Robert C. Prokopf

**Nebraska National Guard**  
**Meritorious Service Medal**  
Chief Warrant Officer Douglas A. Benes  
Master Sgt. Genine M. Hovick  
Sgt. Joshua A. Ford (posthumous)

**Nebraska National Guard**  
**Commendation Medal**  
Col. Scott A. Gronewold - 2 awards  
Lt. Col. Thomas R. Brewer  
Sgt. 1st Class Derek L. Whisenhunt  
Sgt. Colby L. McCoy  
Spc. Damon J. Schlenker

**Nebraska National Guard**  
**Individual Achievement Medal**  
Capt. Craig W. Strong  
1st Lt. Joseph E. Kaplan  
2nd Lt. Zachary V. Labrayere

Sgt. 1st Class Vincent E. Luhn  
Sgt. 1st Class Daniel P. Mitchell  
Sgt. 1st Class Daniel W. Nastase  
Sgt. 1st Class Paul H. Spieker  
Sgt. 1st Class Pamela R. Whisenhunt  
Staff Sgt. Brian D. Blankenship  
Staff Sgt. Gerald D. Bouska  
Staff Sgt. Dennis J. Hartman  
Sgt. Scott D. French  
Spc. Nora J. Hull  
Spc. Frank W. Kivela  
Pfc. Timothy J. Greiner Jr.  
Pfc. Casey N. Sorensen

**Air National Guard**  
**Bronze Star**  
Col. George R. Skuodas

**Meritorious Service Medal**  
Lt. Col. Richard W. Jost  
Lt. Col. Keith A. Schell  
Maj. Brent E. Moore  
Senior Master Sgt. Dallas R. Bartlett  
Senior Master Sgt. John D. Frost

**Air Medal**  
Maj. Mark C. McMahon  
Maj. Daniel D. Wingard  
Capt. Benjamin M. West  
1st Lt. Sean M. Soder  
Tech. Sgt. Brian N. Wood  
Staff Sgt. Kodi M. Ingle

**Air Force Commendation Medal**  
Lt. Col. Gary J. Krupa  
Senior Master Sgt. Michele J. Carlson  
Master Sgt. Thomas J. Kripal  
Tech. Sgt. Brad L. Edmonds Sr.  
Staff Sgt. Adam L. Keske  
Staff Sgt. Daniel J. Patterson

**Air Force Achievement Medal**  
Lt. Col. David E. Severson  
Master Sgt. Kenton E. Disney  
Tech. Sgt. Penny E. Gerking  
Staff Sgt. Adam T. Clements  
Staff Sgt. Sarah A. Harms  
Staff Sgt. Stacey J. Jarosz  
Staff Sgt. Mandy R. Joens  
Staff Sgt. Carey S. Wacker

Sgt. Renee K. Ryan

TAPS

Master Sgt. David L. Pracht

Justin R. Vonloh

**Master Sergeant**  
Stephen J. Stanislav

**Sergeant First Class**  
Patrick H. Closson  
Ronald A. Davey  
Timothy S. Elder  
Douglas L. Reeves  
Kurt A. Truesdell

**Staff Sergeant**  
Timothy J. Andersen  
Adam J. Borer  
Robert M. Hayden  
Stacy L. Nyberg  
Rodney W. Verhagen

**Sergeant**  
Shelley J. Brown  
Chase A. Davis  
Adam J. Hake  
Michael E. Keith  
Adam J. Kosch  
Brian L. Mueller  
Greg J. Ransen

Brandon S. Regnier  
Erin D. Smith  
Jared S. Wiehn

**Specialist**  
Travis J. Ayers  
Stuart F. Brutsche  
Gabriel C. Conrad  
Bradley W. Dickey  
John M. Farho  
Michael A. Gordon  
Nicole M. Greve  
Misti A. Johnson  
Mikhail D.A. Lerma  
Fredrick Lucius Jr.  
David A. Martinez  
Randy J. Matheny  
Garrett L. Mozak  
Zachary J. Parmenter  
Shaun M. Pekarek  
Bobbi J. Tropf  
Cody O. Williams

**Private First Class**  
Ashley M. Bergantzel  
Michael S. Booksmills  
Normal A. Cook

Michael W. Demarinis  
Scott D. Dickmeyer  
Matthew S. Engler  
Patricia C. Evans  
Francesca Fonseca  
Michael K. Hicks  
Theresa L. Hobbs  
Kodey J. Kerkman  
Scott R. Koehler  
Jessica D. Montemayer  
Bradley L. Sheldon  
Richard J. Stedman

**Private Two**  
Heather M. Boone  
Trevor J. Headley

**Air National Guard**  
**Lieutenant Colonel**  
Barbra S. Buls

**Senior Master Sergeant**  
Hubert J. Brunk Jr.  
Robert H. Chadwick  
Stephen J. Gooder

**Master Sergeant**  
Denise L. Anderson  
Jason P. Holsten  
Mike I. Miller  
Janelle M. Priest  
Ronald J. Schroeder  
David C. Sandstedt  
Bryan J. Tlamka  
Dean A. Zitek

**Technical Sergeant**  
Thomas Lannin  
Joseph Hraban

**Staff Sergeant**  
Matthew Oestmann  
Timothy Vest

**Senior Airman**  
Brent Frohner  
Nicole Lecci

**Airman First Class**  
Andrew O'Grady

ENLISTMENTS

**Army National Guard**  
**Medical Command**  
Christina L. Green  
**92nd Troop Command**  
Jenna R. Medley  
**Joint Forces Headquarters**  
**(Temp. TDA)**  
Michael J. Keller  
Michael T. Penn Jr.  
Scott C. Spofford  
**1st Battalion, 209th Regiment**  
Mark A. Vanderheiden  
**2nd Battalion, 209th Regiment**  
Nicholas A. Province  
Jeremiah J. Szynskie  
**Headquarters 209th Regiment**  
Joshua N. Fry  
**600th Transportation Company**  
Amber L. Ammon  
Luis U. Cardona  
Beau K. Davis  
Craig E. Downs  
Jonathan E. Happel  
Kamara L. Harris  
Joshua B. Malcom  
Constance C. Maxie  
Carl W. Roux Jr.  
Kyle A. Sperry  
**HHT, 1-134th Aviation**  
Jessica A. Annis  
Zachary S. Benson  
Reba A. Craig  
Angelina L. Gonifas  
**Troop A, 1-134th Aviation**  
Victor H. Martinez  
**HHDD, 734th Transportation Battalion**  
Le J. Nutzman  
**192nd Military Police Detachment**  
Robert A. Rasmussen  
**1057th Transportation Company**  
Shann M. Dane  
**Detachment 1, 1057th Transportation Company**  
Kevin J. Burton  
Timothy M. Buskirk  
**754th Reconnaissance/Decontamination Company**

Jeremiah D. Schaible  
**Detachment 2, 1074th Transportation Company**  
Clinton F. Brady  
**1074th Transportation Company**  
Robert J. Gardner  
Clint N. Walther  
**HHDD, 867th Quartermaster Battalion**  
Prestyn R. Corey  
Jasmine N. Gilbert  
James A. White  
**HHDD, 126th Chemical Battalion**  
Titus O. Abure  
Mark A. Boesen  
Steven L. Breedlove  
Melissa A. Drake  
Steven J. Jacobs  
Russell L. Stewart  
Cordell J. Vidrane  
Detachment 1,  
**267th Ordnance Company**  
Michael G. Cordes  
**Detachment 2, 267th Ordnance Company**  
Joshua S. Rexus  
Garrett D. Schukei  
**267th Ordnance Company**  
Renee A. Faber  
David D. Jones  
Joey L. Meyer  
Randy J. Peitzmeyer  
Aaron M. Rockford  
Shawn C. Sheets  
Daniel L. Simpson  
Zachary L. Wright  
**Detachment 1, 1075th Transportation Company**  
Blake S. Bivona  
**1075th Transportation Company**  
Matthew T. Williams  
Patrick J. Williams  
Jesse D. Winer  
**755th Reconnaissance/Decontamination Company**  
Martin D.L. Libby Jr.  
**HHDD, 110th Medical Battalion**  
Bernadette J. Brownclerk  
Craig W. Niemeyer

**Troop C, 1-167th Cavalry**  
Brock A. Ackerman  
Joseph A. Bizal  
Cody A. Clark  
Timothy E. Dalrymple  
Alex J. Driewer  
Daniel G. Falcon Jr  
David M. Flores  
Dusty D. Green  
Robert C. Jones Jr.  
Jeffrey A. Kane  
Nathan S. McIntyre  
Philip C. Mills  
Jamason D. Shed  
Robert E. Sherrard Jr.  
Jose R. Torresgarcia  
**Detachment 1, HHT, 1-167th Cavalry**  
Curtis D. Belt  
Adam G. Wassung  
**105th Personnel Detachment**  
Bryan L. Nelson  
**Company B, 2-135th Aviation (GSAB)**  
Justin K. Chadwick  
Justin R. Vonloh  
**Detachment 1, Company D, 2-135th Aviation (GSAB)**  
Joshua D. Ommert  
Steven T. Wagner  
**Detachment 1, Company E, 2-135th Aviation (GSAB)**  
Daniel C. High  
Andrew J. Smithson  
**Detachment 1, HHC, 2-135th Aviation (GSAB)**  
Christopher M. Gilland  
**623rd Engineer Company Vertical**  
James B. Benal  
Cameron J. Gereau  
Derek M. Gulovsen  
Benjamin G. Helmink  
Vic W. Hiatt  
Dustin W. Peterson  
**41st Rear Operations Center**  
Vernon A. Chandler  
Andrew S. Dietrich  
Cassandra L. Dutcher  
**313th Medical Company**  
Nathaniel M. Collins

Brody L. Eller  
Casey R. Farmer  
Brett E. Jacobsen  
Andrew G. Jarvis  
Jenifer L. Jenkins  
Andrea G. Langdon  
Julio F. Lara  
Marissa J. Garcia McRoberts  
Jeffrey S. Ostwald  
**134th Infantry Detachment (LRS)**  
Christopher A. Kelley  
Andrew J. Winkler  
**1618th Transportation Company**  
Lauren M. Bunsen  
Tyler J. Lauer  
**Detachment 2, Company A, 449th Support Battalion**  
Lloyd T. Morris III

**Air National Guard**  
**173rd Air Refueling Squadron**  
Kristen Gorans  
Jason Melton  
**155th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron**  
Christopher Sautter  
**155th Civil Engineering Squadron**  
Adam Armstrong  
Morgan Huttes  
Bryan Mattes  
John Pierson  
David Russell  
**155th Logistics Readiness Squadron**  
Adolph Parra  
**155th Maintenance Squadron**  
James Fox  
Justin Ingle  
Brandy Meyers  
Brett Ziemann  
**155th Mission Support Flight**  
Phyllis Brwon  
**155th Security Forces Squadron**  
Tyson Pierce  
**155th Medical Group**  
Kent Trembly

Shorttakes

You Know People,  
You Know the Guard

Turn  
that  
into  
CASH!

G-RAP  
\$2,000  
Per Enlist &  
Ship

Apply online at  
www.GuardRecruitingAssistant.com  
Guard Recruiting Assistance Program (G-RAP)



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

**Guardsman honored for wounds received in 2005**  
**Purple Heart:** Spc. Jeremy Fulton, Detachment 1, 1075th Transportation Company, receives his Purple Heart from Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska, July 17 in North Platte, Neb., before the start of the send-off ceremony for members of the 1074th Transportation Company. Fulton earned the medal for wounds he received on Aug. 7, 2005, while serving as a truck driver in Iraq.

Pursuing Dreams  
Air Guard leader receives award for supporting enlisted education program

By Capt. Kevin Hynes  
Editor

A senior Air National Guard leader recently received a major award for the support he has given to noncommissioned officer education. Col. George R. Skoudas, 155th Mission Support Group commander, was presented with the Air National Guard Noncommissioned Officer Academy Graduate Association Region Three I.G. Grown Command Excellence Award for 2006 in early August. In the award citation, Skuodas was credited with promoting “in-residence professional military education at every opportunity, most particularly by monitoring PME progress base-wide and making regular reports to the wing commander.” Skuodas’ support of the Air National Guard Noncommissioned Officer Academy Graduate Association and Chapter 76 “The Big Red Chapter” were also acknowledged. “Colonel Skuodas clearly demonstrated the esprit-de-Corps and leadership abilities that truly support of the enlisted force,” the citation further states.

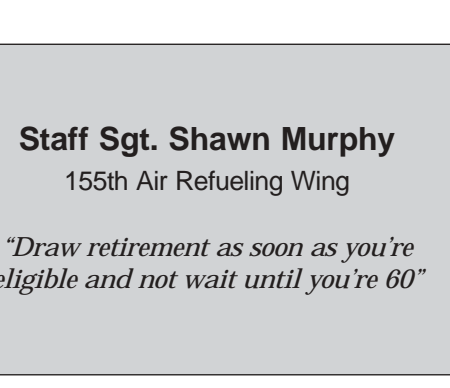


Street Talk

“What benefit would you most like to see added to the benefits the National Guard already offers?”



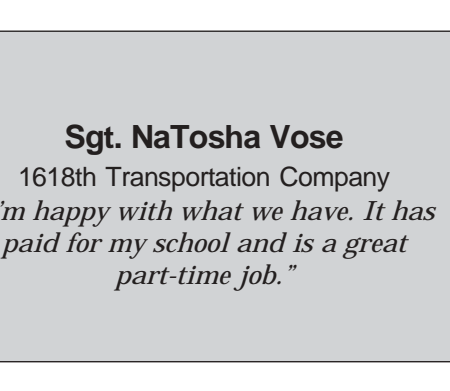
**Pvt. Brett Stubbs**  
1618th Transportation Company  
*“New and better equipment to train on during our drill weekends.”*



**Staff Sgt. Shawn Murphy**  
155th Air Refueling Wing  
*“Draw retirement as soon as you’re eligible and not wait until you’re 60”*



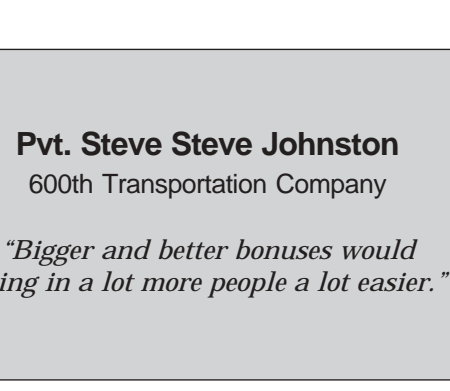
**Pvt. Jeffrey Albers**  
1618th Transportation Company  
*“Since we are always on call, it would be nice to have more money.”*



**Sgt. NaTosha Vose**  
1618th Transportation Company  
*“I’m happy with what we have. It has paid for my school and is a great part-time job.”*



**Sgt. 1st Class Michael Wood**  
Joint Forces Headquarters  
*“Get better medical coverage because a lot of these young Soldiers don’t have jobs that have good health insurance.”*



**Pvt. Steve Steve Johnston**  
600th Transportation Company  
*“Bigger and better bonuses would bring in a lot more people a lot easier.”*



Friend gave life for freedom

I lost a friend on the last day of July.

We weren’t friends using the common definition of the word. he was simply someone I knew of.

We didn’t hang out together; in fact, we had never been out together. We didn’t call and talk on the phone. There was quite an age difference between us.

I knew my friend mainly through an extended family and community that defined common values of hard work and patriotism. I knew that if we were to ever be together for some length of time we would understand a certain style of understated, self deprecating humor common to Nebraskans.

I knew him to be hardworking, caring and patriotic — like his parents, neighbors, and friends.

I will never get to know this friend personally because he died in Iraq on July 31. His name was Joshua Ford. But I will get to know more about him through his family and friends—his National Guard family and friends; his community family and friends; and, of course, his natural family.

Josh and I are part a unique extended family known as the Nebraska National Guard. Joshua Ford was born and raised in Northeastern Nebraska where patriotism is genuine and people know how to work. He and I shook hands a few times and exchanged small talk. I remember him mostly because his last

The Adjutant General  
Major General

Roger P. Lempke



name is same as my wife’s maiden name (but no relation).

An improvised explosive device killed Josh making him the fourth Nebraska Army National Guard casualty in the fight to defeat terrorism in Iraq.

I lost a friend; we all lost a friend. Through our National Guard family we knew Josh and will remember him as a dedicated Soldier and friend.

I gained a friend on the first of August. I’ve seen this friend and he has seen me, but he doesn’t remember. I know what this friend will be like because I know his family.

My new friend is my grandson, Caden Michael, born to my son Mike and daughter-in-law Jennifer. It’s great being a grandparent again and I anxiously wait for the time when he will recognize grandpa, scoot around and develop a vocabulary.

A bond will develop naturally based on family and the values he will learn every day—the very same values taught to me by my parents during my formative years; the same values Shirlee and I instilled in our children.

More than anything else I pray for a safe and free nation for Caden and my three other grandchildren to grow up and live in. My friend Josh helped assure

this will happen.

Josh contributed more than his life for the cause of freedom. His eagerness to serve, his pride in being a good Soldier and the example he set before death will continue to

inspire others to focus on defeating terrorism.

So in many ways Josh has helped assure that my grandchildren will very likely enjoy all benefits of being born American.

The Nebraska Army National Guard reached a small but important milestone on the sixth of August. In September 2004 the number of Soldiers in the state reached 3,400—the highest number since sometime in the 1990s.

Then the bottom fell out, so to speak. A combination of factors—some related to the conflict in Iraq and others related to marketing strategy—caused our number to drop to around 3,250.

Last summer the trend turned positive and we have been consistently growing ever since. On the sixth of August our end strength was again reported at 3,400.

This time we aren’t stopping here. Instead of being a plateau, this time the number 3,400 simply marks a spot on our climb to full strength. But achieving it is a small but significant milestone resulting from a combination of good recruiting and retention which will again place Nebraska in the upper echelon of force structure management among states.

Josh Ford will be remembered not for how he died, but for how he lived

If there are any lessons to be learned in the death of a Soldier – and I always believe there are – perhaps the greatest is the fact that, no matter who we are or what we do, all of us have the capability of touching lives far beyond our expectations or understanding.

So it was with Sgt. Joshua Ford.

Josh was a truck driver with Wayne’s Detachment 1, 189th Transportation Company. He died on July 31 when an improvised explosion tore through his truck during a convoy mission in southcentral Iraq.

I never knew Josh, so all I’ve got to go by are the memories of his unit mates and the stories told by his father. The more I’ve learned, the more I wished I’d had the opportunity to meet this remarkable young man.

Two days after Josh’s death, I traveled to Pender, Neb., to help his father prepare to meet with members of Nebraska’s media to discuss his son’s death and the memories he had of the young man who hoped to be an artist one day, the Soldier who loved driving “the big trucks” and the son who lived to help others.

Of all the things I’ve ever done, this was probably the toughest for me personally. Fortunately, Lonnie Ford, like his son, is a remarkably strong and caring person who quickly made me feel at ease in an extremely difficult situation.

One of the things that Lonnie told me as we met to prepare for

My Turn

Editor, Prairie Soldier  
Kevin J. Hynes



Guardsman in Lonnie’s classroom. Josh’s touch had indeed been felt.

Facing the media, Aug. 2, Lonnie spoke of a young man who loved to draw, who enjoyed movies, com-

puter games and barbecuing steaks. He spoke of a young man who made the surprising decision to join the National Guard in Wayne as a junior in high school and the unlikely Soldier who had developed a love of driving trucks and was even considering pursuing an officer’s commission and making the military his career.

But mostly Lonnie spoke of the impact that Josh had made, of the lives he touched, of the memories he left.

Later, Lonnie told me that one of Josh’s sisters had joked a day earlier about how he would always be remembered for leaving in a blast.

As I drove back to Lincoln that afternoon, my mind kept wandering back to the words Lonnie spoke as he stood in front of the media with a remarkable level of poise and dignity even though emotion often caused his voice to break while talking about the death of his son and his pride in the life he lived.

In my mind, Josh indeed will be remembered for a long, long time. Not for how he died, but rather for how he lived his life. Of how he loved the people he knew. Of the type of Soldier he was. Of the type of man he grew into.

He was a true Nebraska hero.



# Top Guns

## Shooting matches test old, new marksmen alike

By Spc. Sheila Swantek  
Staff Writer

As the Adjutant General's Marksmanship Competition welcomed new members this year, it also said goodbye to a couple veteran members.

The TAG competition, an annual event, was held Aug 4-6 at the Greenleaf Training Site at Hastings, Neb. Approximately 160 Soldiers and Airmen from various units throughout the Army and Air Guard participated in the shooting competition, which included four areas of discipline: rifle, pistol, sniper and machinegun.

Capt. Gordon Bjorman, match director for the Adjutant General's Marksmanship Competition, said the event is both a competition and training.

"We are able to provide an advanced level of marksmanship training through competition," said Bjorman.

In providing this topnotch training, Bjorman added that the support staff is invaluable when it comes to the success of the competition.

Master Sgt. Lynn McCord, safety noncommissioned officer, agreed as his eyes well up with tears knowing this is his last year to participate after 31 years of involvement.

"We want to teach these Soldiers how to protect themselves against a real life enemy that is trying to kill them," said McCord, "This training could be the difference in saving their lives and their buddy's life."



**Eyes On Target:** A Nebraska Army National Guard Soldier takes aim at a target during the 2006 Adjutant General's Combat Marksmanship Matches held Aug. 4-6 at the Greenleaf Training Site at Hastings, Neb.

As veterans of the competition bring certain skill sets, the Soldiers who are new to the competition add a much needed flavor as well.

"Through their questioning of the more experienced shooters, they bring out what the experienced shooters subconsciously take for granted," said Bjorman.

So whether new or veteran of the competition, the training forces shooters to react, added

Bjorman. "Our trainers have proven themselves nationally and internationally in shooting competitions and they are able to mentor the newer Soldier in various situations," said Bjorman. "It transcends the generation gap and helps the Soldier gain the skill faster."

Even though every year the disciplines remain the same, Bjorman added that the scenarios are enhanced.

"Soldiers want a challenge and we are here to provide them one. We take their basic individual weapons qualification skills to the next level," said Bjorman.

Tech Sgt. Shannon Nielsen, secretary for the Army Guard chief of staff, is a direct reflection of the training and mentorship provided. Nielsen placed first in the Individual Sniper in her first competition. "There were a lot of experi-



Photo by 2nd Lt. Carlos Van Nuden  
**Top Shooter:** Tech. Sgt. Shannon Nielsen prepares to compete in the sniper competition. Nielsen won the overall event, a first-ever feat for a National Guard woman.

enced sniper shooters and they all made sure you understood what you were doing," said Nielsen, "That allowed me to get the most out of the training even though it was a competition."

Master Sgt. Robert Harrop, assistant marksmanship coordinator for the state of Nebraska, has been involved in the Adjutant General's Marksmanship Competition for 13 years with this year being his last. He said he is proud of the fact that Nebraska Soldiers are some of the top shooters in the nation and that he has played a role in that success.

"I thoroughly enjoy being a part of an elite class of shooters," said Harrop.

## Runners hit tarmac in August during National Guard's annual Thunder Run

By Staff Sgt. Matt Boring  
Staff Writer

Omaha native Paul Wilson, 24, streaked across the finish line with a blazing time of 15:59 to win the 5-Kilometer Lincoln Thunder Run hosted by the Nebraska National Guard, and the Lincoln Track Club at Air Park Saturday.

Wilson set a blistering pace of 5:09-per-mile for the event which converts into approximately 3.1 miles, but managed to edge out the second place finisher by only six seconds.

Ryan Salem, 31, of Lincoln finished second with a time of 16:05. Laura Thies, 26, of Lincoln led the women and finished with a time of 20:04.

An annual event, the Thunder Run caters to runners of all ages. There was a one-mile race and a 5-K race with overall win-

ners as well as winners being declared in categories designed to accommodate all ages and both males and females.

Travis Donlin, an 11-year-old from Gretna won the one-mile race with a time of 6:09.

Three hundred seventy seven people entered the event and the ages ranged from two to eighty eight.

In addition to the sporting event, the Thunder Run played host to a variety of static displays provided by the Nebraska National Guard. Both the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard brought equipment ranging from a KC-135R Stratotanker to a light armored vehicle and Hum-Vee.

All participants in the race were awarded for their efforts with a t-shirt, and all children



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex salmon  
**Tearing Off:** Kids by the dozens sprint out of the starting gates at the start of the children's one-mile race of the 2006 Thunder Run, held Aug. 5 near the National Guard air base in Lincoln.

entrants received a prize. The overall winners, and winners of each category received gift certificates to the Lincoln Running Company of varying denominations ranging from \$50 to \$10.

## Nebraska National Guard Adventure Race

October 22, Camp Ashland, Neb.

- ♦2-person/4-person teams (male, female, coed)
- ♦Armed Forces Division
- ♦Disciplines: (running/hiking; navigation/map reading; mountain biking; water events; mystery challenges)
- ♦Hosted by Nebraska Sports Council
- ♦All entrants must have mountain bike-type bicycle, pack and water hydration system
- ♦Starts: 9 a.m. Camp Ashland Training Facility
- ♦Half-price entry fee for National Guard teams
- ♦More information at: [www.nebraskasports.council.com](http://www.nebraskasports.council.com)



Photo by 1st Lt. Cole Kilpatrick

## Royal First Pitch

**Strike?** Major General Roger Lempke (center) throws out the ceremonial first pitch with other senior military leaders from the Midwest during the Kansas City Royals' annual "Heroes Day" game, Aug. 5. The annual Royals celebration — one of the largest of its kind in the Major Leagues — is designed to acknowledge the contributions of the military (active, Guard and Reserve) from the surrounding states. Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska, represented the Cornhusker State during the ceremony.